

**DISCOURSE**  
OF THE  
**Repugnancy of Sin**  
TO THE  
**PRINCIPLES**  
OF  
**Universal Reason.**

Being a Dissuasive from a sinful Life from  
Principles of Common Wisdom, cur-  
rant amongst all Mankind, save onely  
in the concerns of their Souls.

*By Jacob Aud, formerly of Exeter College  
Hla. 46. 8. in Exeter*  
*Remember this, and shew your selves men.*

*Omnia peccata sunt in universum contra rationem &  
naturæ legem. Div. Aug.*

LONDON, Printed, and are to be sold by Edward Mil-  
lington at the Bible in Little-Britain, and William  
Abington at the Black-Spread Eagle at the West-  
End of S. Pauls. 1679

347 10

Republ. of Sin

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usually according to the

It is not clear from the text whether the "other" referred to is a specific individual or a general category of people. The text is heavily obscured by noise and artifacts, making it difficult to discern the exact meaning. The visible fragments suggest a discussion about a person's actions or characteristics, but the context is lost.

employed in the Service of the  
and in particular as a

[illegible]

Gen Rec 13 May 42 Norman



THE  
P R E F A C E.

**S**carce ever any Age did make equal pretence to Reason with ours, and it cannot in Justice be denied the honour of not contenting it self in any part of *Learning* with a slothful implicit *Belief*, but with great diligence continually attempts a *rational account* of things, men not being content to know by other mens *Understandings*, but they will *understand for themselves*. Nor hath *Reason* been unsuccessfully employed in the *Service of Religion*, and in particular it hath contributed

## THE PREFACE.

tributed very much to the defence of its *Fundamental Principles*, and excellently frustrated the assaults that the *bold, but corrupt Reason* of some men made against them: so much that *Infidelity* might go into compleat *despair*, if it were not better maintained by *Interest* than *Argument*. And we may with such a *rational assurance*, and in as manifest *wisdom*, renounce the *World*, the *Flesh*, and the *Devil*, and follow Christ our Saviour into Heaven, where he is before, and for us entered; as any *wise man* to improve his Estate can take a *Voyage* into another Country, which he hath never seen. But when *Reason* would intermeddle with our Lives, and claims its *right of Command* over our Wills, and to prescribe to our Affections, ~~and~~ men  
shame-

## The PREFACE.

shamefully and unpardonably forsake it, and nothing is more unreasonable than the *Lives of men*, and this Age so well improved in *Reason*, in case of *Sin*, is not so very impatient of *absurdity*. And it is enough to justify a great indignation, that notwithstanding the *shame* that belongs to doing *unreasonably*: *Vice* puts on a mighty confidence, and such whose whole life is a course of *unreasonable*, and therefore *foolish actions*, put on a mighty assurance, and look bravely, as if they would *outface* the *Wisdom* which God hath attested: and they proceed to *claim the honour* of *Wit* and *Sense*; and with them they are but reputed *Fools*, who will not be so indeed, for the sake of their Company: though, I conceive, a little consideration might force them to allow

## The PREFACE

of the distinction between *Wit* and *Wisdom*; for what do they care for such a severe thing? and we might let them go away with the honour of such *Wit*, for which they are never the wiser. But under these pretences they maintain a *publick Reputation*, and go far towards the exploding the dishonourableness of *Sin*, which scarce any Age but ours, made any doubt of. It is therefore necessary to see how able they are to reconcile *Reason* to their *Evil ways*; for manifest *Reason* will in the end prove too hard for all their *Wit*. Though I would not be mistaken, as if I had published this Discourse for their sakes, who of all men, will be *most unlikely* to peruse it, yet meeting them so fully in my way, as especially belonging to my Subject,

## The PREFACE

ject, I could not forbear to express some indignation against the confidence with which such men do sin. I conceive the Subject to be of a more general use, and the Arguments (if they have received no prejudice from an unequal management) to be of equal conviction and motive, and if we will not forsake our understanding, to be as hard for us to withstand as to answer. The Discourse hath convicted the unreasonableness of Sin by the evidence of Demonstration, though to allay the vanity of that great word, it hath proceeded upon Aphorisms and Principles of the Common People, and made use of the Rules but of the most vulgar Wisdom. For the first and most general Principles of Wisdom are neer, and obvious, and plain: to which pur-

## The PREFACE.

pole that saying of *Moses* is applica-  
 ble, and we need not say, *Who shall*  
*ascend into Heaven and bring them to us?*  
*neither are they beyond the Sea,* *Dent. 30.*  
 14. We do not owe the Discovery  
 to the Courteous Revelation of any  
 Oracle, nor to the Travels of any  
 Wise man, in search after knowledg;  
 that ~~what~~ must be repented of, ought not  
 to be done, that the degrees of goodness  
 and necessity, make a right of prece-  
 dence, &c. By these and such like  
 Rules (though many times unhee-  
 ded) all men buy and sell, and  
 plant and live: onely how our  
 Souls have forfeited their right to  
 a share in the common Wisdom of all  
 the World, I conceive no man can  
 tell. I am sorry for the reason I  
 have to make some Apology for my  
 stile; for though I have proposed  
 to

## The P R E F A C E.

to my self scarce any thing therein to recommend it to the Reader, but its being *Plain* and *Expressive*, yet I find my self so many times deficient in either, that I am forced to entreat him to practise a little extraordinary *Attention* and *Candor*; *Candor* is easie to the Ingenious, and I hope their *Attention* may pay it self. May the Reader by the blessing of God receive any good measure of the benefit intended to him hereby, and in some hope of which, I expose these Leaves into the Publick Light, and I shall have the satisfaction and pleasure of the accomplishment of a great desire.

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THE



The Author being too remote to oversee the Impression, there have happened in it frequent Errors, to the great prejudice of the Sense; the Reader therefore is desired to correct them with his Pen. The principal ones are these which follow; the others (amongst which are frequent mispointings) are left to the Readers own observation.

Page 11. line 1. read *many*. p. 18. l. 3. r. *promiss*. l. 6. r. *monstrates*. p. 21. l. 15. r. *prove*, and put a Comma for a Period after *nothing*. p. 29. l. 1. r. *their*. p. 31. l. 1. r. *A. L. 71. r. must be*. p. 40. l. 23. r. *it self*. p. 48. l. 17. r. *descended*. p. 51. l. 25. r. *as he is*. p. 52. l. 15. dele *self*. p. 68. l. 14. r. *to labour*. p. 69. l. 10. r. *to make the experiment*. p. 77. l. 14. r. *Princes*. p. 81. l. 5. r. *Amara-rige*. p. 96. l. 27. r. *understanding*. p. 98. l. 15. r. *speaking of*. p. 111. l. 1. r. *wears*. p. 114. l. 1. r. *intimates*. p. 131. l. 27. r. *anything*. p. 146. l. 13. r. *difformity*. p. 179. l. 26. r. *it is changed*. p. 188. l. 11. r. *fit*.

THE  
CONTENTS.

---

The Introduction.

**B**Eing an Essay towards the solution of that difficulty: How Reason in man is able to bear the contradiction which it suffers in a sinful life? Page 1.

SECT. I.

Wherein is obviated the prejudice at the name of Reason, the Discourse supposing Revelation and Faith on Principles of which Reason proceeds: Nor do such save the honour of their Reason, who wilfully exclude the Faith, in hope thereby to sin less dishonourably. The Heathen in great, though not so great measure convicted of unreasonableness in their sinful lives, the knowledge of their duty being to be attained by neer and plain consequence from the knowledge of God, and of themselves. The charge of unreasonableness

## The Contents.

*ness in Sin justified by the consent and authority of the Holy Scriptures.* Pag. 13.

### SECT. 2.

*Several Maxims of Practical Reason premised ; one applied, that is, the right of Infalibility to determine the Truth or Wisdom of all things in controversy, and this grossly contradicted by the Sinner.* Pag. 35.

### SECT. 3.

*The wilful Sinner convicted of the absurdity of forsaking the Counsels of God to whom Goodness inseparably belongs, and of complying with the suggestions of the Devil certainly known to pursue an inveterate malice against all mankind.* Pag. 45.

### SECT. 4.

*What we must certainly repent of is unreasonable to be done, yet this is frequently done by the Sinner, the absurdity exposed of encouraging himself to commit Sin by the encouragement of a future Repentance.* Pag. 56.

### SECT. 5.

*That it is repugnant to all Reason to attempt*

## The Contents.

tempt a manifest impossibility, and the impossibility of attaining the happiness, which we cannot but desire, in the ways wherein the Sinner pursues it, manifestly proved, and attested by our own, and all mens experience, and acknowledged by universal consent. P. 65.

### SECT. 6.

The right of authority that a great rational necessity bath over all the rational nature asserted; and that in great part it supplies us with power towards the performance of the obedience we owe unto it. The needlessness of Sin in comparison with the great necessity of saving our souls, illustrated. Pag. 76.

### SECT. 7.

That by the common Reason of all men, the first place in our account, intention and endeavours, doth belong to the chiefest good; that beyond all dispute Heaven is that: and Survey of that exceeding great felicity, towards the disparagement of such things as in the choice of Sinners are placed before it.

Pag. 91.

### SECT. 8.

The pleasures of Sin examined: The best of

## The Contents.

of their Plea produced and found wanting, and fit to be insisted on onely when Heaven is forgotten: The advantage these pleasures pretend to, over the eternal ones, by reason of the distance of those to come, examined and refuted. Pag. 125.

### SECT. 9.

That all the Reason in the World is agreed that the greatest and worst evil ought to be chiefly feared, and most carefully avoided: That Hell is that: A brief account of the reasonableness of so great punishment against such as think it injurious to the honour of God, to practise such extreme Justice: The great advantage to be made of the extremity of those sufferings: The unreasonableness of putting away from us so great a fear: That to condemn both Heaven and Hell, is repugnant not onely to the Principles of Universal Reason, but also to that principle of Universal Nature, Self-preservation, and the natural Love of our selves. Pag. 142.

### SECT. 10.

That it is manifestly unreasonable to do such things, and to take such a course as cannot abide

## The Contents.

abide consideration: That the Sinner do so, for that sin neither before nor after the commission of it can endure to be considered.

Pag. 161.

### SECT. II.

The repugnancy of Sin to Consideration, further insisted on, as particularly respecting Reflection and Fore-sight: As concerning Reflection, it cannot be reconciled to the Wisdom that is to be learned by our reflecting on all past examples, and the Sinner makes void and useless to himself the experience of all the World before him: as concerning Foresight, he must look but a little way before him, or else he overlooks, and sees beyond all his happiness, and he deprives himself of all the benefit of instruction, which a rational foresight ought to fetch unto us from the World to come.

Pag. 176.

### The Conclusion.

Wherein by just consequence from the reasoning in the two foregoing Sections is inferred the great usefulness of Consideration, and the Reader earnestly exhorted to the practice of it, from the great efficacy thereof towards our Repentance; and in particular,

the

## The Contents.

the efficacy thereof insisted on to excite in us agreeable affections towards such great things duly considered by us, and consequently by our affections to excite our endeavours: The Arguments of the whole foregoing Discourse particularly pressed in an earnest exhortation. Page 187.

Reflection and Fore-sight: As concerning Reflection, it cannot be reconciled to the Wisdom that is to be learned by our reflecting on all past examples, and the Sinner makes void and useless to himself the experience of all the World before him: as concerning Fore-sight, he must look but a little way before him, or else he overlooks, and sees beyond all his sin, and he deprives himself of all the benefit of instruction, which a rational Fore-sight ought to fetch into us from the World to come.

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THE  
REPUGNANCY of SIN

To the Principles of  
Universal Reason, &c.

THE  
INTRODUCTION.

**T**Here are some things so unaccountable, that if they were not, we should scarce allow them possible to be; amongst which we may place the continued revolt of Reasonable Creatures from God, and with, and in him, from their own happiness. It is a difficulty which hath exercised the Wits of the Learned to resolve

solve, how our first Parents with a due perfection and rectitude of all their faculties, could be persuaded to sin (a thing from which pure innocence could not but be very abhorrent,) that is, to tell where the tempter could find a place in a perfect innocent nature to fasten that Engine, wherewith he threw the whole World into confusion. And it is not a much less difficulty to understand how the succeeding Generations of men in their Wits (if they are so) can continue a long course of that fatal and unsuccessful disobedience: For that grand Apostasie is continued with less reason, that is, upon weaker temptations than it was first begun, and aggravated with the circumstance of refusing our first Parents dear bought experience, their sad example being sufficient to disabuse our vain credulity, and to undeceive our expectations of ever profiting our selves by a sin, to the aggravation of our case we do not sin upon the incitement of so great hopes as those, by, and from which our poor progenitors fell; that was upon expectation, in raking on the filthy Dunghil of sin, to find  
some

some Jewel of the Crown of Heaven; for they were promised to be as Gods, Gen. 3.5. But Man now continues the Fall, though against as great and just fears as were set to guard *Adams* innocence, and to the apparent hazard of a better Paradise in full prospect than that their disobedience lost them; yet but upon poor hopes, and upon such pitiful sorry temptations, that the baseness of the temptation in most cases, adds to the inexcusableness of the sin. For which, and many more considerations to be insisted on in the following Discourse, admitting Man to retain a right still to the denomination of Reasonable, it is not easily accountable how he is able to persist in that Apostasie, under the woful effects whereof he groans in present miseries, and worse fears, therein (which is our business to prove) doing continual violence to his Reason, that principle without which he were not Man, and offering force and even despite to his own mind, than which nothing is more himself, and which makes up his whole definition; so that to an impartial consider-

ration it appears evident that the greatest absurdities and contradictions to all sound sense are in practice; and that all the absurdities that are believed, are far exceeded by those that are done every day, and to deny the possibility of motion, and the Snow to be white, and to believe both parts of a contradiction to be true, is sober Philosophy in comparison of living ungodly; and this is no more than what is fully included in that approved saying of a Wise man, *That the speculative Atheist is the greatest Prodigie in the World, the practical one onely excepted*; who himself being of a right persuasion, puts in practice the others damnable misbelief, and in his works denies God whom he believes to be; to do which hath in it all the absurdity of denying the conclusion, onely for the commonness of the thing it is accounted more shameful to dispute absurdly, than to live so.

It may prove worth the enquiry to learn what may be offered to resolve the doubt, how a reasonable Creature can continue a course of actions so repugnant to the principles of humane understanding, as a  
sinful

sinful life examined appears to be, that is to say, how a mans Reason can look on and see him destroy himself. It doth not so well resolve the difficulty, as aggravate the wretchedness of a sinful condition, to say that the Fall hath put man into a preternatural state, disordering very Nature in him, and displacing his very *essentials*; as if it had changed him into another *species* of beings: for if the predominant faculty give the denomination, he is not so much a reasonable as a wilful Creature, and is Man revert, having his Head deposed from that Supremacy to which by divine ordination it hath a just claim; but this is rather to cut the knot than to unloose it, to destroy the question in stead of resolving it; for it is in effect to deny Man in his fallen estate to be so reasonable as the question supposes him to be. And indeed to deny Man the denomination of Reasonable, would be a Paradox not to be pardoned, it is certain he is so by the constitution of his Nature, and yet it is as certain that through the usurpation and tyranny of his inferiour faculties over his Reason, he in a state of Sin, lives

as if he were not so, as to the exercise and act, it being at the choice of his will how reasonable he shall be. It was said in reproof of the *Milesians*, that they *were not Fools, but had done such things as Fools use to do*. In like manner a sinner is not truly an unreasonable creature, but yet in such concernments, wherein he ought to shew all the reason and wisdom too which he hath, he acts as he could but do if he were so, and what nothing can excuse, but to be so indeed: for nothing can excuse the doing like Beasts but onely to be such.

The further and closer we prosecute this Enquiry, the more we discover the wretchedness of a sinful state, and the wilfulness of sin; all that can be alledged in this case reflecting severely on the malignity of the will, from which indeed results a vicious impotency to good, but that is so far from excusing the sinner, that the greater it is, the more wicked it speaks him to be; for otherwise to become the more wicked, would be to become thereby the more excusable. The will indeed is to account for all the sins and miseries  
in

in the World, that is the Spring of all our Woes, for that hath corrupted it self, and Man is a reasonable Creature but only when he will; the will hath broken off the yoke, and denies subjection to the Laws of the Mind, and usurps authority over it: it makes its own choice, and is its own Law, and having power to determine and restrain the understanding in its operations, suspends as much of that light as it cares not to make use of, and by this artifice makes as much darkness to it self as is needful to the ends of sin, and so the sinner knows to good purpose no more than he pleases, and by inconsideration winks hard, and makes himself to all intents as blind as he will, loving darkness so well as to make it: Thus the wilful sinner uses his head like a Dark-Lanthorn, and turns the dark side of it upon himself. So our blessed Lord reproves the wicked of his time for closing their eyes, (*Mat. 13. 15.*) *lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and should be converted: they being (as it proved) obstinate against conversion, were fain to*



take some pains with themselves not to understand, to use art with themselves to preserve themselves from becoming of a right mind, and did wilfully keep themselves out of their wits, that is, they did practise some artifice to preserve their errors, and shut their windows against the light, whose reproofs and convictions they could not abide.

And besides this in such things which for their irresistible evidence the sinner is not able to withstand their conviction, yet his mind as conscious to it self that it hath lost its authority, speaks in a faint submissive voice, it is not suffered to form its practical sentiments into peremptory Edicts and Laws, and to use *style imperatorio*, and to tell the man roundly, This you must and shall do; but it is forced to condescend to those obsequious terms, May it please you,

To this purpose *Hierocles* complains of the wicked, Τὸ ἑαυτοῖς λογικὸν ἀκμὸν ἐὰν δὲ ἀπαρδὲ φανλόπερον ἔδεντο, *that they use their own mind and reason basely, without any reverence, putting it to do slavish things; for their mind is made to turn*  
Parasite

Parasite and to flatter that thing in power, their insolent Will; that is, to flatter the Usurper of its own Throne, to use all its wit to invent excuses, defenses, yea and sometimes praises for Madness and Folly. And indeed the Sinner hath need of something within him to flatter him, being unable to abide always the reproofs of an impartial conscience, and he would find it a very uneasie condition to appear always to himself to be that very Fool that he is; for *omnis stultitia laborat fastidio sui*, all folly is uneasie to its self, as being a very fulsom thing; and therefore the Sinner transgressing all the rules of Wisdom, needs some subtilty of wit to palliate those follies which else would stare on him with no pleasing aspect; and it is very necessary, what shift soever a man makes for it, that he preserve some reputation with himself.

And this abuse of mens wit to flatter their sins, is not onely acted closely within the closet of their own breasts, but there are some who having (as it seems) great occasion to practise it with themselves in secret, have attained so great abilities

lities therein, that they make open profession of this vile art; and being the most impudent men living, endeavour to transfer the shame of folly from sin to the highest of all our wisdom, that is, the true fear of God; as if they hoped to make such fools of mankind, as to make it accounted less glorious to do wisely, than by a lucky wit to defend the doing otherwise; and that it were no longer the Fools, but the Wits, that make a mock of sin. But for the honour of their Wit, would they would tell us, What can be more foolish than to be wilfully mad?

In further pursuance of the Enquiry, the Will hath not onely a power over the Understanding to silence and enslave it, but also an influence on it to seduce and corrupt it. It puts a cheat on the mind, and recommends the congruity of an unworthy object to its own depraved appetite, under the notion of a thing good and to be desired; and the mind takes the recommendation of the affections being not permitted to enquire whether it be not some depravity in the faculty that makes this agreeableness between

tween Sin and the Will, nor to ask any other questions worthy of resolution, ere in reason a man can venture on that forbidden thing; and so by degrees the *malignity* of the Will infuses and insinuates it self into the judgment, and a Vice begets an Error, and the man doth not chuse by his understanding, but understands by his affections; for all experience confirms that our affections varnish the things we love with a beauty undiscernible to other eyes, and by our affections our will corrupts our judgment. In short, Man as his fall hath made him, is more Will than Mind, and the Soul exerts it self much less in judgment than in affections; the judgment seems as if it were withdrawn into some deep retirement in the soul, where for neglect and want of exercise and improvement, it becomes inactive, yields it self to drowsiness and slumber, in a condition rather to make pleasing dreams than wise decrees, whilst the forward affections stand ready at all the avenues of sense to salute every harlotry object which carries any temptation in its looks, and do make their hasty

sty choice, e're the slow judgment enters sufficient *caveat* to suspend the determination.

But the more we examine the ways and arts that men use to take the advantages to shift off silence, corrupt or prevent their own understanding, that they may be able to live ungodly ; the more we expose the wilfulness of Sin, and justify the severest of the punishments that are reserved for the wilful : for after all it remains apparent, that the mighty truths in which our Salvation is chiefly concerned, are so evident and obvious, and occur so readily to our minds with that irresistible conviction and pressing weight, that it cannot but be with some difficulty, that is, with some art with, and force upon themselves, that men can forbear to become good.

SECT.

## SECT. I.

**B**Efore I betake my self to the making good the charge of the *Repugnancy* of Sin to the principles of the common Reason, and therein to the current *Maxims* of the universal Wisdom of all mankind, I think it needful to remove a prejudice, that some will be ready to conceive from the name of Reason, which this Discourse carries in its *Front*; that being a word of suspected credit with some persons, with whom all arguments taken from thence, will be thought to favour of the weakness of *Philosophy*, and to come much behind, if not to be prejudicial unto the far more efficacious means of our conversion revealed in the Word of God.

Towards the removal of this offence, I shall onely need to explain in what sense I use the word Reason; and then if any thing be wanting to their full satisfaction, I conceive they may have it in those several

ral places of Scripture which I shall make choice of to confirm my position, which do equally justifie my argument. The wisdom of God having seen it expedient to press the very same argument in reproof of Sinners, frequently charging them with *degenerating* from their own nature, and doing things unworthy of it, and frustrating the chief end of their Understanding, a less offensive name of Reason.

I therefore premise that I do not speak of Reason as shining barely with its own weak light, and crowned onely with its own pale raies, but as enlightned with a clearer and brighter light from the holy Scriptures: for this whole Discourse supposes in the persons reprov'd, a knowledge and professed belief of the Word of God, and the saving Gospel of our Lord and Saviour *Jesua Christ*, and consequently that they have sufficient information of the history, rise, mischiefs and remedy, of that woful Fall, of which the whole Creation expresses a sense in a universal groan: and yet that they, unreasonable men, by peremptory fining after  
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the similitude of the first transgression declare, as plainly as actions can speak, that they will justifie and stand to the *Apostasie* they made in *Adam*, and so persisting in their fallen estate, give their after consent to the fall; and therefore cannot reasonably hope to excuse themselves, pretending that they were unborn when the revolt was made, since by the part they wilfully adhere unto, they declare plainly, that they want nothing but to have been born sooner, to have been more early in the transgression.

And this they do, notwithstanding that the certain knowledge of the consequent mischiefs of the Fall leaves no room for hopes of impunity; the threatening denounced against sin being in so good degrees made good already in sensible demonstrations, that as many as persist impenitent, had need to be able to hope what they will, e're they can expect a tolerable state of misery in the approaching eternity; for from all examples registred in those sacred records of times past, we may certainly inform our selves, that God is in very good earnest in his threat-

threatnings, and therefore that in reason we cannot preserve in our selves a belief of the innocency or harmlesness of Sin; and may assure our selves that never any sinner carried the comfort of his sins out of the World with him, and therefore it can be no wisdom to abide the venture of eternal repentance, for to have our choice of which life we please of all the sinners whose History is there recorded.

And to the further aggravation of their account, being by the same divine revelation instructed in the powerful remedy of our common Fall, they can no more justify their impenitency from any just despair, than venture to sin in any reasonable presumption of impunity. They cannot continue their rebellion in pretence that it is in vain to submit; for the golden Scepter is reached out unto them, and reconciliation stands waiting their leisure, the price of their redemption is paid down; all that is wanting is on their parts, a reconcileable mind to God and true goodness: and to help remove the difficulties of our Conversion, there is sufficient motive in the way and means of  
our

our recovery to work any sensible heart to that contrition and relenting, as is necessarily required towards our acceptance, the grace revealed being mighty to produce the grace required: no argument in the World being more apt to excite in us repentance for our sins, than the consideration that Christ died for them, which is enough (if any thing be so) to reconcile not onely God, but us too, which proves to be the hardest part of the Reconciliation.

And what doth equally encourage our conversion, and aggravate our impenitency, we learn from the Word of God (the belief of which we suppose in the persons reproved) that God promises to our Repentance not onely acceptance but a reward, and that greater than our original innocence preserved, was permitted to look for, and it takes not from the encouragement that to unfold the mystery of this grace, we say in the greatness of the reward, God rewards the worthiness of his own Son in our persons; for it takes nothing from, but a most delicious favour unto the promised happiness to

ow it to our Redeemer, and it heightens the eternal joys, to owe them to the love of Christ. These things I promise to be known and believed, to shew how well informed and instructed I suppose Reason to be, as in us it demonstrates against a sinful life.

But this supposition of such a Knowledge and Faith in the persons here reproofed, ought not to be extended to the exclusion of two other sort of persons from a proportionable share in the like reproof; and those are,

- |             |                |
|-------------|----------------|
| 1. Wilful   | } Unbelievers. |
| 2. Unwilful |                |

1. Wilful Unbelievers, that is, such who are so, not for want of the means and sufficient reasons of Faith, but by the choice of their own wills, and therefore embrace unbelief, because it best serves to the ends of sin, and turn Infidels, onely that they may be the less shamefully wicked: of all men in the World, it being most unaccountable

table in a Christian to be ungodly. This I rather take notice of, because, according to the character given to us of our Age, there are not a few who catch at little objections against the Faith that is so repugnant to their sinful lives : but when it is a part of their artifice and wit to attain to be Unbelievers, shall their Unbelief help them ? Neither is it any great commendation of their wit, to imploy it in finding out evasions from that Faith by which they might be saved : for the excellency of the Revelation considered, it is extream madness to suffer our Will to take part with Infidelity, and to make choice to err at the cost of so great comforts as the Word of God ministers to us. Though it be certain that the excellency of a Truth doth not amount to a proof, yet the more worthy it is of all acceptation, the greater folly it is to reject it : the desirableness of being immortal cannot prove us to be so ; yet it argues baseness and folly in any man to be willing to confute so excellent a property of our Nature, and to be greedy of an argument to so mischievous an end. And besides,

since it is apparent that it is Concern that makes the Unbelievers, with whom here we have to do, it is needful to oppose interest to interest, they being beset with great fears on condition Hell might not be, could be content there might be no Heaven: but if they would be persuaded, Faith would become more their interest than Unbelief is now; and they would not easily imbrace the confutation of such excellent hopes as the Scriptures give us. It is to be foolishly incredulous upon no better argument of unbelief than the wit of Unbelievers have ever produced, to reject these sacred Writings which contain the most excellent truths in the World; Truths meet to entertain the speculations of Angels, and to be the delight and recreation of glorified understandings, and which no wise man would change to have any thing else true in their room that ever entered into the heart of man to conceive: so that it had need be a very powerful and convictive argument that should be able to make us deliver up such a precious Faith, and disbelieve a Revelation that abounds in such exceeding

ding great and precious promises, and is more worth to good men than the evidences of all the Estates in the world to their Owners, and doth ascertain to us the happiness of the World to come, giving us the comfort, as well as the assurance of our own immortality. The very desirableness of the things believed, ought to make us more tenacious of this belief than to surrender it up to every little doubt, or weak suspicion, for Infidelity never yet offered more in its own defence: all the arguments that ever have been produced in its cause when examined, proves nothing. But how little a matter can mislead such as are willing to be misled, and that nothing is more credulous than mens desires, and that their Belief is very much at the disposal of their Interest and their Will, and therefore it is no wonder that they make some shift to evade so uncomfortable a belief as that of the Scriptures is to all such as will not obey them: but their best reasons prove altogether unable to ensure their presumption, and to ascertain them so well against the contents of this sacred Book,



that they can reflect on their evil wayes with such assurance as men ought to have in a case wherein to be mistaken is to be remedilessly undone. The substance of what hath been said on this Head, amounts to this, That it is alike unreasonable to make choice of such an uncomfortable and unsafe Unbelief, and to live repugnant to the contrary excellent and well assured Faith.

2. The other thing needful to be subjoined to the former, is, That though the imputation of unreasonableness in living a sinful life, be charged with fuller evidence and greater force, on such as are acquainted with the mind of God revealed in his Word; yet even others who have onely the benefit of bare natural light, cannot justifie their sins to their own impartial Reason: for there is a legible impression on the mind of Man, of a Law of everlasting righteousness and goodness; and it is engraven into the very Make of our Natures, and we must run away from our selves, to get rid not onely of the *obligation*, but of the *conscience* thereof. So that a meet *consultation* with our own  
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minds is sufficient to inform us, that it is highly *criminal* to live in contradiction to the end of our Being, and below the dignity, and to the reproach of so excellent a Nature; and that our Maker will exact an account of us of our divine faculties and powers, given to us doubtless for better purpose than the services of Sin. A mans own natural understanding without a revelation from Heaven, is able to instruct him, that he ought chiefly to serve the will and ends, and glory of the author of his Being, that our nature being apparently capable of several excellencies which we celebrate and praise in the blessed God, we become obliged to a likeness thereunto in our persons, and an imitation thereof in our lives; that is, conforming unto, and imitating the divine Wisdom, Goodness, and Holiness: So that from hence we may learn, that the Heathen had these two ways amongst others, of understanding their duty in discerning between good and evil.

1. First from the knowledge of God.
2. From the knowledge of Themselves.

1. From the knowledge of God, which St. Paul testifies, is so evidently to be learned from the works of his Creation, that it rendered an ungodly life inexcusable even in them. *Rom. i. 20. For the invisible things of him from the Creation of the World are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and god-head, so that they are without excuse.* And it being impossible to frame any agreeable notion of the eternal god-head, but in the union of all divine perfections and excellencies in infinite fulness, it becomes a consequence of easie deduction from such a notion of God, to understand our duty and obligation to him an infinitely perfect being our Creator. For what doubt can be made, but almighty power, supreme goodness and beneficence, infinite wisdom, immutable holiness, truth and faithfulness, challenge the most awful adorations, the most pious devotions and oblations of continual praises and prayers, the supreme love and desire, the most humble submissions, and the most entire obedience from all his Creatures. And this discovery is not  
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of that intricacy, nor of so remote consequence as the knowledge of the learned Sciences, and several Arts useful to humane life, which they first invented, and then improved to great perfection.

2. Another way of learning their duty was from the knowledge of themselves, from the consideration of their own Nature, and of what faculties, capacities, and powers they were

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ἡ φύσις ἀπει-  
λῇ ὡς ἐν τῷ  
το. Mar. Ant. l.  
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endowed with, and to what ends they did serve, and to what purpose in reason they were given unto them. To this purpose the fore-mentioned Author, a professed Heathen, speaks very agreeably, Οὕτω τῇ ἑαυτῶν γνώσει ἔ ἀπαξιώσει τῆς μὴ προπύοντων λογικῆ φύσεως, ἡ τῆς καθήκοντων ἀσφαλτολογίας. Τήρησις ἐνρίσκεται πανταχῶ· that is, *in the knowledge of our selves, and of what is becoming the reasonable nature, we have a sure rule of our duty.* To which he subjoins, πρὸς κανόνα πλὴν ἐστίαν ἀποβλέποντες. Δεὸν ἐν πᾶσιν ἐνρίσκομεν. *By inspection into our own essence we discover what is required of us, the reasonable nature being a rule and law to its self.* St. Pantaffirms the same thing, when

when speaking of the Gentiles, he says, *Rom. 2. 14. These having not the Law, are a Law unto themselves.* What is discordant, unbecoming, dishonourable and injurious to the true humane Nature, that is sin; what is agreeable thereunto, what serves unto its due honour and dignity, that wherein it resembles the akin, though superiour natures of God and his Angels, to gratifie its divine affections and superiour appetites with agreeable objects and pleasures to which they have in themselves an apparent designation, to imploy the powers and faculties of our nature to their designed uses, that in their exercise they are improved, ennobled and bettered, this is Vertue, this is the whole Duty of Man: Which in part is the meaning of the same Author, *πάντες δὲ ἀμείνονα πρὸς ψυχὴν ποιεῖ, τὸ τοιοῦτος ἀρετὴ, ἡ φιλοσοφίας νόμος.* that which is conducive to the good of the soul, that is Vertue and a Law of Philosophy or Wisdom: so that the Heathen were not left without all necessary means of the knowledge of their duty, it necessarily resulting from the knowledge of themselves, and it being so obvious

obvious an enquiry to consider what we are, and whence we come, and what we serve unto, and what is the reason of our Being; from such considerations it was very natural to gather, that the divine Wisdom gave us souls for ends agreeable unto, and worthy of such excellent natures, and that it is inconsistent with the same Wisdom and goodness to appoint us for ends and uses too little for, and unequal unto our selves, and which would render the chiefest excellencies of our nature superfluous; for our Nature hath in it self not onely a strict *obligation* to God the supreme and original Being, but also a plain *designation* for, and *propension* towards him the supreme and original good; for being finite Beings, we have yet in a sort infinite appetites and boundless capacities; and certainly our blessed Creator would not give us such capacious spirits to leave so great a *vacuum* in the reasonable nature, as will remain after the World hath done its best to fill it. And now remembering that we are Men, the sins that generally enslave and befool Mankind, carry in them the plain  
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*signatures* of folly and shame; though there were no written Law, it were a plain base and evil thing to live after the flesh, that is, to make quick senses and a vigorous appetite of more worth and use than all the faculties of the mind; for so our upright aspect and humane wit would serve but to make us the goodliest and wisest of Beasts, and all that we have of Man to be of no other use, but that the Brute in us might be better served, and our humane understanding serve onely to supply the want of *instinct* which meer Brutes have in greater perfection.

It remains now to shew that God in his

Jer. 2. 24.

Prov. 26. 3.

2 Pet. 2. 12.

Isaiah. 27. 11.

Rom. 1. 31.

Word uses the very same argument in reprovng Sinners, upbraiding them with gross follies, with degrading themselves to the basest of Brutes, and below those sorts of them that have any resemblance of Reason in the Animal Nature; that they are without understanding, and do relinquish those humane faculties, Mind, Reason, Memory, and Reflection; and are degenerate not onely from the likeness of his nature, but from  
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the dignity of his own. *Psal. 32. 9. Be ye not as the Horse and the Mule which have no understanding.* That Exhortation implying, that to be disobedient to the counsels of God, and to persist in our own ways, notwithstanding all Gods promises and threatnings, those motives of persuation congruous to humane nature, is to divest our selves of our preeminence above Brutes, *whose mouths must be held in with the Bit or Bridle.* It is to forsake and sin against that Reason which differences us from them, and to be false to the main discriminating property of our nature, and to suffer a *degradation* with that famous King in *Daniel*, to have our heart changed from mans heart, and to be of choice what they are by the necessary condition of their nature.

It amounts to the same thing that the wisdom of God in very many places of Scripture makes the shameful name of *Fool* the ordinary denomination of the ungodly. So that every man, almost as often as he reads Fool in the Word of God, understands wicked, and the Wise  
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he interprets the good: and now unreasonableness is the onely explication we can give of Folly, and makes up all the conception we can frame in our minds of it. Fool primarily is the name of persons who are grossly deficient in the common *functions* of Reason, and have apprehensions and discourses greatly abhorrent from it. But there are also another sort of persons that have equal right to the same denomination; that is, such who in their greatest and nearest concerns, (unless any thing be nearer to them than their own Souls) obstinately resist that Reason which the other want, and in their affections, choice, and actions, equal the most extravagant of the others follies; unless it be admitted for an extenuation of their follies to practise it in greater matters, and that in less important things they give proof enough that they want no wit, and that they are but what they will, as if it were a mitigation of the shame of Folly, that it is wilful. However in laying folly to the charge of Sinners, God intimates this, that we must account to him for the violence that we do to our Reason,

Reason, and hath implicitly approved that known saying, Λόγος ὁ ὀρθὸς πάντων ἐστὶ Θεὸς ταύτῳ ἔστι · that Reason is the voice of God in man, that he is disobeyed in our disobedience to that.

There can be nothing more full to our purpose than that exhortation or reproof (for it is both) which we find in the Prophet *Isaiah ch. 46. v. 8. Remember this and shew your selves men* : which words must understood as exposing the shame and folly of Idolaters ; but in that one sin we have a specimen and proof what affronts a mans understanding must put up, when he is under the power of his sins. For if those foolish Idolaters would but have consulted with their Minds and Reason, they might inform themselves that it was a very absurd and shameful thing to see Man the Lord of this visible Creation, doing an humble reverence before, making solemn Prayers and Penitential Confessions unto, and imploring the mercies of the Stock of a Tree ; that it is equally absurd to make a god, and to pay divine honour to what himself doth make, to say to the Wood awake, and to his own Work-

Workmanship, *Deliver me, for thou art my God*; undoubtedly a man must do violence to the humane understanding in bowing down before the goodliest or richest Idol, though it were that large Fabrick of Gold, the pride or superstition of King *Nebuchadnezzar* set up, how hard soever it may seem not to commit some Idolatry to so much gold.

Nor yet will it relieve them to extenuate the Idol into an Image. First not before God; for he concludes under the guilt of the same undistinguished Idolatry, the framing any likeness of his glorious God-head, *ch.40. v.18. To whom will ye liken God? or what likeness will ye compare unto him?* Nor secondly, could they justifie it to their own Reason, which is able to inform them, that it is impossible to frame any pretended representation of God, but what must needs be injurious to the divine glory; for what can be more dishonourable unto him than to think that the God-head is like to any thing that mans Art can frame: if we will shew our selves to be men that are his Off-spring. So we must conceive of him

as S. Paul teaches us, *Acts* 17. 29. *Forasmuch then as we are the Off-spring of God, we ought not to think that the god-head is like unto gold or silver, or stone graven by art and mans device.* For what Artist can engrave or paint a sound, or savour or voice, any internal quality or vertue! in what colours or shape will they give us the likeness of Wisdom, or Truth, or Faith, of a pure mind and Spirit: much less can all the Art in the World give us the image of an infinite Spirit *radiant* with all the glories of immense Wisdom, Power, Holiness, and Goodness. What bold Pencil dares attempt the unapproachable excellencies? But it is not onely the foolish Idolater, that is liable to the reproof in this Text; for by *Analogy* and parallel Reason it may be extended to all wilful Sinners in general, and not onely because wilful sins are interpretative and vertual Idolatry, being both a defection from God, and a preference of something before him which is as unworthy of a competition with him, as an Idol is to fill his Throne. And so it seems to be accounted by the Spirit of God speak-

ing in *Samuel*, 1 *Sam.* 15. 23. and not only for that reason doth the reproof of unreasonableness belong to all wilful sins, but also because in their own nature, and in their certain and necessary consequences they are as repugnant to the undoubted principles of our common understanding; and I hope e're I have finished this Discourse, to make it evident, that to sin wilfully is no less unreasonable than to make sacred oblations and earnest prayers to a piece of Wood, whose other part we make no scruple to burn.

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## SECT.

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## SECT. II.

**I**N order to the making good the proposition to be proved, I think it needful to note, that the wise Providence hath so framed our Nature, that the necessary Principles of Reason whether speculative or practical, do not lie very deep, but offer themselves so readily to the humane Mind, that it hath been a question, whether they are not born into the World with the Soul, or do not flow from it by emanation as Light from its Fountain. This is certain, that they are so self-evident, that we need neither spin nor toil, study nor dispute for them, by their own authority and native evidence, they demand the assent of all mankind, and we do not teach them every man his brother, or learn them our selves by a series and gradation of reasoning, but know them by intuition. The Principles which concern our purpose are principles of action, the first maxims of common Wisdom:



Such as these: That the best good ought to have the first place in our account, to be chiefly desired, and loved, and sought; the greatest evil most to be feared, and chiefly to be avoided: That it is plain folly to attempt plain impossibilities, and to do things which we know we must repent that ever we did them; with divers others, things as evident and indisputable as the first principles of any Science. That all the parts of a Circle are equally distant from the Center: That equal dimensions or numbers, having equal parts added to, or subtracted from them, remain still equal, are not more evident than the fore-named principles, which are the common voice of all humane Nature, and have the universal consent and suffrage of all mankind: and therefore in proving that to sin wilfully, and to live an ungodly life, is a transgression of those and other common and self-evident maxims and principles of humane Wisdom, I therein make good the imputation of unreasonableness and folly which I charge on a sinful life. Having but now occasion to consider what is the revealed  
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mind of God in the case before us, and how plainly he hath declared against living ungodly. I do thence take occasion to make use of to our purpose this maxim or principle of common Reason; *That it is absurd and unreasonable to be differently minded from, and to forsake the conduct of acknowledged infallibility.* We may consider this maxim as relating both to Truth and Wisdom; in both senses it suffers the contradiction of wilful sinners, and infallibility it self shall be in the wrong, rather than they will suffer themselves to be reclaimed.

I. In the first respect, acknowledged infallibility hath an undoubted right to the supreme seat of judgment, from whose decrees and determinations there can be no appeal, to dissent from it is a contradiction, that is, it is to believe things to be otherwise than we are sure they are; yet so the Sinner distresses his own mind in passing judgment of good and evil contrary to the determinations of divine authority, therein absurdly dissenting from omniscience; for he frames conceptions, and conceives an opinion of these things as contrary to the express mind of God,

as the opposite parts of a contradiction are to each other: He calls things by contrary names, and describes them to himself by contrary characters to those by which God calls and describes them: as if Good and Evil, Honour and Shame, Wisdom and Folly were words of a quite contrary signification on earth to what they are in Heaven, and the weights and measures of the Sanctuary were not fit to become the common standard and measures of Good and Evil, and the great Truths of Gods Word were never true till a day or two before we die, or that the most evident maxims of Piety were but Holiday opinions, which we admit in the Church, but carry a contrary belief all the World over. But how do they make such different notions agree amongst themselves in the same mind? while they they admit that God cannot but be infallible, that in him there is light and no darkness at all, and that therefore all things must be what he sees them, how do they believe themselves in dissenting from him, who they are sure is infallible? There is some *fascination* in the case,

for the humane understanding cannot unite with both parts of a contradiction; and admitting it to be impossible for omniscience to be mistaken, it follows that they in being differently minded, must by just consequence believe what they know is impossible to be true. There is nothing can help them out of this perplexity unless they call in Unbelief to their relief; a mixture of which, Divines say, is necessary to hold together Sin in its being. But it is grossly unreasonable in any but an Infidel to be contrary minded to express Scripture, and to preserve a judgment of things repugnant to that infallible determination.

2. As truth ascertained by acknowledged infallibility, cannot be resisted without making our selves liable to the charge of being grossly unreasonable; so Wisdom that the same infallibility ensures is of double force and efficacy; for to the evidence of truth, it adds the attraction of goodness, wisdom being truth and goodness in union. Though truth be as beautiful as the light, yet it may become accidentally ungrateful, True and Good

are but metaphysically reciprocal, we say some things are too true; and for holy truths the gratification the understanding may be capable to receive from them may be lost in the offence and disgust they give to the affections, and *blessed is he who is not offended* in them. But Wisdom is a most unexceptionable name, all men rise up and call it honourable; it is a name of good report all over the World, Reason is our excellency, and Wisdom is its perfection, and it needs no other justification but to appear to be itself; no man can move a tongue against it but to his own shame; and nothing can be more unreasonable than to resist infallibly ascertained (that is) in a sense, irresistible Wisdom, as we read of the malicious *Jews* in *St. Stephens* case (*Acts* 6. 10.) that they were not able to resist his Wisdom, and yet they did. For when as if that Wisdom which makes a mans face to shine had embodied self and shone in his face in a visible glory, they were able to resist it still, and to throw stones in that face which so lately they saw so radiant as if it had been the face of an Angel,

(v. 15.) and the glory of the divine Wisdom shines with as conspicuous a lustre and irresistible evidence in his Word. Yet Sinners can and do resist it, for they are able to do incredible things, and which (as I noted before) would be thought impossible to be done, but onely because we find by experience that they can do them. But yet infallible Wisdom hath an undoubted right of conduct over all the reasonable World; yet absurd Man in walking in ways forbidden him of God, foolishly forsakes that Wisdom which he is sure cannot err. For the Laws of righteousness, holiness, and goodness which God hath given us in his Word, are so many Maxims and Rules of infallible Wisdom; which consideration *Moses* uses to excite the obedience of that People, *Dent. 4. 6.* *Keep therefore and do them, for this is your wisdom;* and in many other places the wisdom of being holy and obedient, is attested by Divine Infallibility, and therefore in making the wisdom, made known to us by revelation from Heaven, the rule of our choice, judgment, affections, and lives, we become infallibly assured that

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we think and chuse, love and desire, hope and fear, do and live wisely. It hath always been accounted a mighty honour to *Socrates* to be declared by an Oracle to be the wisest man alive; and much more doth it conduce to the glory of *Solomon* to have his wisdom attested by a more certain divine Authority, and by infallible omniscience to have all that went before, or ever came after him, excluded from a competition with him in the glory of his Wisdom; and this honour stays better with him than the glory of all his greatness and magnificence, and yet the same infallibility hath as plainly and more frequently attested the wisdom of being holy and good; so that in an holy choice we put our selves into the number and succession of those excellent persons, who by infallible Wisdom are recorded for Wise, whom not onely all generations of the Church do consent to praise, but whose Wisdom also is attested by an Oracle. For not onely those particular Saints who have had the honour to be registred by name in holy the Scriptures, but the righteous in general are declared  
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by the Oracles of God to be the wisest of all men, and that according to S. Pet. (2 Pet. 1. 19.) is at least as much as to be proclaimed to be so by a voice from Heaven; this honour have all his Saints to be declared wise by an Oracle. This is our comfort, we have the infallible divine Wisdom to assure us in the way that leadeth to life, as joyful a Guide as the Star the Wise-men saw in the East. And it recommends this wisdom to us, that it is the attainment rather of Faith than of Argumentation, and requires principally but an honest heart and an obsequious will; and so we captivating all our thoughts to the obedience of Christ, our Faith shall be accounted to us for Wisdom: and Christ shall be made to us Wisdom as well as Righteousness, and our chief Wisdom shall be to be led by him; for under the conduct of *Infallibility* we shall not need to dispute, but only suffer our selves to be led; and by this Faith to all the main intents and purposes of Wisdom, we shall be as wise as if we had an Oracle in our breasts. But on the other part there cannot be given or desired a more convictive

proof

proof of the foolishness of a sinful choice than that it is directly repugnant to that Wisdom which is impossible to be mistaken; for the Sinner opposeth his own Conceits against the Wisdom which formed the Heavens and the Earth, and shines gloriously in all the Creation; and what can be more foolish than to think to be wise in opposition to the onely wise God. For a Sinner not to take this for a *demonstration*, that in living ungodly he is foolish to plain absurdity, is to add another *demonstration* that he is so. For to ask the question over again, what can be more apparently absurd than to deny *Infallibility* to be in the right? and to dissent from him whose infallibility alone is able to over-balance the suffrages of all the World, though all flesh had corrupted their judgment? it being far more credible that all the World should be mistaken, rather than God who cannot; and all the men in the World be found liars, rather than God, for *whom it is impossible to lie*. So that this is certain, that he that will retain his sins hath onely an impossibility to relieve him, but he must be an undoubted

undoubted wilful Fool; so he must be, or that must be which is absolutely impossible. Let him consider it well, and then tell us what can be more unreasonable, than to persist in his own will in spite of *Demonstration* and *Infallibility*.

### SECT. III.

**I**N the next place, to the foregoing absurdity, I add another of the like nature, evident in the choice of a sinful life; that is, That it is to forsake the counsel of a most undoubted Friend, and to give oneself to the conduct of a professed Enemy, and be ruled and led by wiles, which we are sure are intended for our destruction: which is to do violence to that self-evident principle of natural Reason, *that love and goodness is to be trusted before known crafty malice*. To do repugnant hereunto is equally unreasonable and unnatural; so that scarce any instance can be produced of the like, so much as amongst brute Creatures: the silly Chicken  
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will not leave the wings by whose kindly warmth it was generated, to commit it self to the talons of the Falcon: for no Creature is so foolish for it self as the Sinner.

1. The first part of the absurdity charged on him, is to reject the counsel of God our surest Friend, for whom it is as impossible to advise us to our wrong, as it is to deny himself: for it is inseparably belonging to him to be good; goodness is the chief notion we must have of him, it is his nature, it is himself; and that is the hope of all the ends of the Earth, for the whole World hath no other security but his goodness. Can infinite goodness give ill counsel? and if that be impossible, is it not grossly unreasonable not to follow that counsel which is impossible not to be good? To undertake to give advice, is to assume the part of a Friend, in all whose persuasions we look for goodness and kindness; and would or can God, infinitely good, personate a Friend to deceive us the better into an ill choice, and in a friendly persuasion practise a wile upon us? To say thus of him, is to blaspheme; for

for to do so (as we are presently to shew) is one chief accusation that we men have against the Devil. But to consider it nearer, how should we suspect the sincerity of his counsels? The eternal God-head is not so indigent as to need to serve it self of us by such dishonourable arts; for it is not so considerable to him whether or no we are wise or good, that he should forsake his sincerity and persuade us to our loss, that he might have the profit of our conversion. We must admit suppositions, that scarce any are absurd or prophane enough to conceive, e're we can believe that the blessed God would persuade and counsel us into a course of life, which ever we should find just reason to repent of. Though you should see Princes descend from their Thrones to flatter the Worms of the Earth, or use the most crafty wiles to ensnare poor worthless Flies, yet even then never believe that God under colour of advice would deceive us, and give the obedient just matter of complaint against his counsels. Most undoubtedly we may safely trust him, infidelity in this case

is as unreasonable as any thing in the whole compass of sin; and whether we consider God as our Creator or Redeemer, we have just ground to commit our selves unto, and repose our selves on his faithfulness and goodness.

1. How should the blessed Creator deceive the warranted trust of his Creature? It is the right of Creatures to put their trust in him, and he assumes to himself the name of the *faithful Creator*. (1 Pet. 4.19.) Every thing is apt to shrowd it self under the Author of its being; and every young thing presumes on a right to the Paps belonging to the Bowels from which it is descended, and desires no other security but to be defended from them: much more are we secure in the faithfulness of our blessed Creator, who hath implanted on almost all Nature kindness and faithfulness towards all her off-spring, and we especially are the off-spring of God.

2. As Redeemer, God hath an especial right to our trust; how, should not God counsel us for our good, who hath not withheld from us his own Son? and therein

therein he hath given assurance unto all men, that we may trust to the faithfulness of so great love; for we may safely commit our selves to the conduct of Love so fully attested as the love of God to us in Christ. Now that our Lord hath ascertained us of his good will to our nature, by assuming it into his own person, when we might have expected rather that it should have been an abomination to him; now that those amazing difficulties and discouragements that stood in the way of his kindness to us could not diminish it, now he hath endured the cross and despised the shame for the love wherewith he loved us; can we ask any further security e're we suffer our selves to be led by him? if what our Lord hath done for our sakes be not security enough for our affiance in him, then all Faith and Trust in the World is nothing but an exposing our selves to be abused; then let the helpless Infant ask security of its Mothers Bowels, that they do not convey some deadly poison into the Breasts whereat it sucks: and let the Branches ask security of their Root, that it shall not send up a malignity in the



vital juice they draw from it; then let nothing in all nature remain secure, but let an universal trembling take all the World in fear, its foundations will prove false to their trust, and throw it into such another *Chaos* as once it was: that our gracious Creator and Redeemer should deceive or mislead us, ought to be the last of all our fears. With how much candor doth our Lord make profession of his sincerity towards us, saying, *If it were not so, I would have told you, Job. 14. 2.* as if he had said, You may trust me, I have no design upon you, I seek not yours but you; and the sequel proved that he served no end of his own upon us, but onely to take in us the pleasure that the greatest love finds in procuring the happiness of its dearest objects, and well may we allow him so reasonable a gratification. It is a plain case our Lord would not deceive the Souls for which he died; and not to trust his counsel, is to be injurious to the greatest love in all the World. But it is the language of a sinful life, that they cannot trust their Saviour who calls them to repentance; as if they thought them-

selves

selves better already than his counsels could make them; and yet as a proof of his fidelity he died for us, and of his ability to advise us, was an eye-witness of both Worlds. These things well considered, it becomes manifestly unreasonable not to resign our selves to the conduct of the greatest love and highest wisdom, which great qualifications for a trust concur in the person of Christ our Lord.

2. Yet in the next place see something more unreasonable in a sinful life, which is to be persuaded and led by a known malicious Enemy, and to take the counsel of Wiles, which we are sure are devised for our perdition, that is, the suggestions of the Devil, an acknowledged enemy of our Souls, and believed to be so as universally as he is believed to be at all; the readiest conceptions we frame of him, is to be an Enemy to God and Goodness, and the Souls of men; and to confirm us in this belief, in the seducement and perdition of mens souls, he receives a mighty gratification of his proper nature as he the thing he bears the name of, that is, the Devil: to promote the destruction of

Mankind is all the diversion he can find to relieve him from his Hell and himself, thereby he enjoys the pleasure of a successful malice against Heaven, with which he hath an irreconcilable enmity, and of frustrating in some measure the end of Christs manifestation, which was to destroy the works of the Devil; and in destroying the Souls for which Christ died, he takes some degree of revenge on him, by whom he hath been led in triumph. No ravenous Beast is more greedy to suck the bloud of its prey, than he to suck the bloud of Souls, and it shews a malice worthy of himself, to be so indefatigable as the Scripture represents him to be in mischief. We may be allowed some severity on a subject so well deserving to hear ill of us men, though certainly if there be any belief to be given to the evidence of actions, most people do not think bad enough of the very Devil, and this tame World hath forgiven him Paradise lost by his Wiles; for how else should they trust him? after a mischievous delusion it is unaccountable folly to suffer him to deceive us a second time; according  
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to our best understanding, it proved beyond his hopes to be ever trusted more; for how could he but think but that by such a vile cheat he had spoiled himself for a Deceiver forever, and that it should be impossible for man ever to confide in the same counsel by which he so miserably fell; unless he could foresee (as it wofully happens) that fallen Man would prove false to himself, and in things of spiritual and eternal consequence baffle his own understanding, and be never the wiser for all the experience his Fall should teach him, nor for all the reason it should leave him. What more unreasonable than to take counsel of such an Enemy, and to venture on the practice of his suggestions, who brought Sin and Death into the World; and who maliciously persuaded us into that fatal mischief, for which we have not yet dried our eyes, and are like to go mourning to our Graves? And shall we be ruled by his counsels again, who made that great alienation between God and Man, and hath exposed us to his wrath, in whose favour is our life; and made us unable to abide his presence, without which it is

impossible for us to be happy? If we have any sense of our condition, or think it like the misery it is, to be fallen, and to miss our innocency, and repent of our revolt, in all reason we shall beware how we take counsel of that malicious Seducer. He hath indeed an ill name amongst all men, and yet his designs continually take, as if they could not suspect any mischief where they are sure they give so little provocation. In other cases it is sufficient ground to suspect any counsel which we understand to have been an Enemies contrivance. *Hoc Ithacus velit, so an enemy would have it,* serves always for an argument of ill counsel, and at least it is enough to render Sin a most suspected thing, that it is a gratification of the great Enemy of our Souls. We all grant that Sin is either the Devils immediate suggestion, or his standing counsel recommended to the World by all the subtlety and artifice of a malicious wit, and that excited by a mighty zeal he hath for his own Kingdom; and therefore to hearken to him, is to take a known temptation for counsel, and wilfully to tread in a snare which we know  
to

to be set to take us, from doing which the very Birds of the Air are hindered by their own natural sagacity, and if any Bird or Beast should do like us, we should be ready to blame Providence for leaving that part of Nature unprovided of sufficient instinct for its own security and preservation. In this case we cannot make our Enemies rejoice but to our own sorrow, and to give them matter of triumph, is to be sure to defeat our selves: and therefore it is a very material consideration, whether the course we take be most like to be matter of joy amongst the good or amongst the bad Angels.

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## SECT. IV.

**I**T is likewise an evident principle of Reason, and an allowed Maxim of Wisdom, that it is plainly unreasonable to do what we know we must repent that ever we have done it. With all men, and in all cases it is allowed for a good dissuative, *You will repent it ; Aderit tempus cum ipse etiam se oderit :* that is, the time will come when he shall hate himself for what he hath done ; and even as it were to hate ones self, is one chief ingredient in the character of Repentance. Says the Poet when he (as it were) sees *Turnus* his hand ready to give that fatal stroke,

*Turno tempus erit magno cum optaverit*

*emptum*

*Intactum Pallanta —*

As if he had said, Hold, you will repent it ; for with the same stroke you give a deadly wound to your own life. But this  
is



is the folly of Sinners, to do things which they know they must repent of, and (which is prodigiously unreasonable) intending so to do: that is, they persevere to sin, notwithstanding the knowledge of such a necessary consequence, as to repent everlastingly, or in presumption of such a reserve as the benefit of a more early repentance. Let them make their choice of what part of unreasonableness they please to take; if the latter seem the safer of the two, yet see how unreasonable a thing it is to do; for repentance is of things foolishly done. *I have done very foolishly*, are the words of *David's* confession, 2 Sam. 24. 10. Repentance throws the shame of Folly into the Sinners face; and it is unreasonable to do a known foolish thing, and such a purpose supposes sin to be known to be. Repentance is but after-wit; and by what principle of Wisdom shall we make a wilful shipwreck, in hopes some broken piece of the shipwrecked Vessel may land us on some safe shore? or take some deadly poison in presumption of the efficacy

of some *Antidote* possible to be had. But if we examine the nature of this Grace, and what particular affections and actions of the mind and heart must concur to constitute true repentance, as the Scripture best describes it to us, we shall find such to be the nature of it as convinces the way of sin to be manifestly unreasonable in the Sinner, who purposes and hopes to repent.

1. It is well known that Repentance both in the signification of the word in the Original Language of the New Testament, and in the Nature of the thing it self intended by that name, signifies a change of the mind. But how can we resolve concerning the same numerical action or course of action to be of another mind ten years hence? Such a purpose supposes the person so purposing to be beside himself now, or at the time prefixed to himself to intend to be so: for if he be persuaded that in doing what he doth, he doth wisely, it is an intended madness to purpose to repent of a thing wisely done; but if he be persuaded otherwise (as such a purpose seems to imply) it is equal madness

ness in doing the thing to be repented of, to be of a mind which he intends to change, that is, to think it wisdom to do a thing which he purposes to think to be very unwisely done.

2. Repentance takes into it a detestation of sin, and our selves too, as becoming a matter of loathing to our selves for the close adherence of such a defilement to us. And the Prophet expresses Repentance by the notion of loathing themselves for a confessed abomination in sin. *Ezek. 6. 9. They shall loath themselves for all the evils which they have committed in all their abominations;* and now to purpose to repent, supposeth the acknowledged abominable nature of sin, and by what principle of Reason can any man justify his present embracing the same thing which in such a purpose he acknowledges to be detestable, and promises himself to account so: that is, how can any man cleave to that now as good, which he intends to detest as the blackest evil? and allow himself to do that, for doing which he intends to loath himself? But to some people sin is never detestable,  
but

but when it is past, and when it is gone let it go for a vile foolish hateful thing, that is, they could have patience with any thing in sin but the guilt, the lonely remains of it, when the pleasure thereof is no more.

3. Repentance includes a godly sorrow, which is a great affliction of the mind, and contrition of the heart, and is that man in his wits who soberly purposes to put on the most sad solemnities of mourning, and to make the most sensible expressions of sorrow for having done that thing, from doing which at the same time with this goodly purpose no arguments can restrain him? Is it not apparently unreasonable to do that thing, for doing which we intend to afflict our selves, and do purpose to think that nothing but a Fountain can supply us with tears enough to bewail that we have done it? Is it not an excess of Folly to make choice of sin, which we do intend to think and esteem to be so evil, that equal to the having been guilty of it, we intend to think nothing worthy to prick our hearts, and to wound our spirits? which are the thoughts

thoughts we cannot but know we must think, when we are become the Penitents we promised our selves to be.

4. We find in the holy Scriptures Repentance represented to us in the form of a *Judicial Process* against our selves, that it is to accuse and judge, and condemn our selves: and what shadow of excuse can our invention supply us with, in defence of doing the very same thing, the having done which we intend to make the matter of a penitential accusation? and how can we justify the doing that thing, for having done which we intend to condemn our selves? Is not that strangely to set our present and future selves at variance? Is not this to be conscious to our selves of the weakness of all the defence we are able to make for a sinful life, in such a purpose implicitly confessing that it cannot succour us even from our own future condemnation? In all true reason why is not any man ashamed to do what he intends to be ashamed that he hath done? And is he not a Brute for doing that, for doing which he intends to call himself so? Reason and Wisdom are

are stedfast unchangeable things, they hold constant to themselves and are without repentance. It is apparently unreasonable to pass a judgment which we are sure to reverse, and to be of another mind than that of which we are sure to die. Certainly Sin is such an ill boding thing, and presages so ill to the Sinner, that it requires a confirmed hardness of heart to practise it without promising himself the benefit of a future repentance; and that very purpose puts him under the same condemnation now, which he reserves for himself at the appointed time; it is an implicate confession that he is even now the same vile, shameless, ungodly wretch, which he intends to call himself at his latter end: such a purpose makes his sins go before into judgment, and he is condemned already, even condemned of himself in that thing which he alloweth. To promise to turn wise some years hence, is for him that promiseth so, to acknowledge that he is a Fool now, and implicitly to take to him at present the same shame he intends to take to himself hereafter. To this purpose *Arrianus* upon *Epictetus* reasons



sons very agreeably : *Nū ſi ōrō ſi nūc,  
 ſi ſi nūc ſi nūc, ſi ſi ſi nūc ſi nūc ſi nūc  
 ſi nūc ſi nūc ſi nūc ſi nūc ſi nūc ſi nūc  
 ſi nūc ſi nūc ſi nūc ſi nūc ſi nūc ſi nūc*, &c. You ſay that  
 to morrow, ſome time hence, you will turn  
 conſiderate and do wiſely, that is as much as  
 to ſay, you will take leave to be ſhameleſs, and  
 fooliſh, and vile till then, and to ſuffer the  
 abuſes of your paſſions and luſts : ſee what  
 unſufferable evils you indulge and give way  
 unto even by your own account, and impli-  
 cite confeſſion.

But for the reſt, who perhaps for the  
 hardneſs of their hearts may think no  
 thoughts of ſo great a change from them-  
 ſelves, and make to themſelves no ſuch  
 unlikely promiſes, but abide the venture.  
 Yet if they think any thing deliberately  
 of things of this nature, which then not  
 to think on, nothing can be more unrea-  
 ſonable ; then they cannot but think and  
 expect that they muſt repent ; for how  
 can they think God would be ſo in-  
 jurious to his own glory, as by the impu-  
 nity of impenitent Sinners to juſtify their  
 deriſion of his ways, and of them that trem-  
 ble at his Word, and ſuffer his Enemies  
 to like and approve, and applaud them-  
 ſelves



selves for ever, and to persist unchangeably in an error so derogatory to his glory, as that there is or ever was any wisdom out of his ways, and in contradiction to him. It must not be, but they must and shall all repent, and what they cannot but expect to repent of, is unreasonable to be done, and it is undoubted Folly to do that which a man must eternally wish that it were undone. In conclusion of this head, let me leave this advice, let no man please himself, that though he knows he must repent, yet he hopes it may be long first, for a certain Repentance, though never so remote, is a sure proof of a foolish choice, and the more remote Repentance is, the more bitter it is, and the farther removed from us, it is still nearer to remedies.

**SECT.**

## SECT. V.

**I**T is a self-evident *maxim* of the universal reason of man, *that it is absurd to attempt an acknowledged impossibility*; and this we lay to the charge of all men who persist unreclaimed in the common revolt from God, that they pursue and look for happiness where it is apparently impossible that they should ever find it: we are not more unanimously agreed in any one thing, than in an universal desire to be happy. It is the language of all the Humane Nature, *Who will shew us any good?* that is, some commensurate good, that our souls may find an happy acquiescence in it: Even such as take courses most repugnant to that desired end, and of choice take the way that leadeth to destruction, and as to the chief course of their lives do the same things, as they could but do if they were confederate with the Destroyer against their own souls; even these by an inseparable law of universal Nature

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aspire

aspire after happiness; for very Nature cannot but desire to enjoy the completion, satisfaction, and perfection of all its capacities and faculties, and that is Happiness.

But we must confess that the happiness that determines this universal consent is it self an indeterminate thing, for take happiness for that determinate thing that it is, and I will almost as soon find Rhetorick to persuade a Rock out of its place, or a River to alter its course, or the Seasons of the Year to change their times, as persuade some men to their own happiness: Yet happy they will needs be, but it is upon impossible suppositions, that is, provided something do make them so which cannot, and that something give it them which hath it not to give; that they may not be at the pains to go to Heaven for it, the onely place where it is; or that they might go thither by descent, that they might attain the end without the means, that they might not discompose themselves in putting off dispositions and affections incompatible with happiness, and that it would devest it self of  
its

its own nature, and accommodate it self, and conform to theirs, and become a carnal worldly and sensual thing, and leave the dwellings of the Blessed and the society of Angels, and come and mingle it self with their Lusts, and keep them company in their unholy ways; in this sense, and with these suppositions they would be happy, even whether they can or no, yea though they know they cannot. Certain it is that all men would be happy, but for the most part they take the most unlikely courses to make themselves so, and practically oppose the agreeing experience of all mankind of the impossibility of being made happy by this present World. And to attest the insufficiency of this World to answer to the expectations of its Idolaters, I might produce the tears of the great Conquerour, when he was told there was no other World but onely this; for he (it seems) found something so great and *capacious* in his brest, that he needed I know not how many such Worlds as this to fill. Neither did this proceed from a largeness of heart peculiar to him alone, for in this respect God

hath fashioned all our hearts alike, though the propensions and powers of some souls need more to be awakened and excited. He, who of all others had the best advantages to make the experiment, how happy it is possible for this World to make us, complains of that *vexation of spirit* which is the necessary result of so great a disappointment; *Solomon* I mean, who seems to be raised up by the wisdom of Providence, and to be set as a Beacon on a Hill, to give this instruction to all Ages of the Church, that to look for happiness below the Sun, is to be sure labour in vain: For *what can the man do that cometh after that King?* Providence gave him such an extraordinary confluence of worldly blessings, that he seems to need all the wisdom that he had, to be able to retain any against the assault of so great prosperity: and it is his own remark, as a thing worthy to be noted, that his *wisdom remained with him*, *Eccles. 2. 3. 9.* So that his wisdom kept him from losing the most savoury enjoyment of all his pleasures in one great *inebriation*, as not unacquainted with the wisdom of *Epicurus* his maxim, that

that Pleasure it self stands in need of Vcr-  
 tue to fix it, it being otherwise a most vo-  
 latile thing; and too he had not barely  
 the dull possession of great abundance,  
 as some who have their Treasures  
 but onely so, as their Coffers in which  
 they lie, may be said to have them too,  
 but he had also a large heart, and a vigo-  
 rous and inquisitive mind; and set his  
 heart upon it, the experiment how much  
 this World is able to contribute to our fe-  
 licity; by his incomparable wisdom be-  
 ing able to extract all it had, having the  
 art of enjoying his great prosperity an-  
 swerable to the degrees of his inimitable  
 wisdom; for as he well knew the plea-  
 sure of every particular enjoyment; so  
 doubtless he disposed them all, as he did  
 the services of his house, into the most  
 agreeable order; that by so orderly a di-  
 sposal and contexture he might make the  
 highest composition of pleasure; for in  
 the pursuance of this enquiry Ecclef. 2.3.10.  
 he represents himself as a  
 most elaborate *Epicure*, and after so dili-  
 gent a search with the advantages of so  
 great abilities and equal opportunities,

it there were any satisfactory good, and worthy of our Souls, why of all things should that be the only Secret Nature should hide from him her Bosom Friend? and now is it not a vain thing to hope to find that in the World which Solomon could not find?

The most material objection that occurs against his experience, will recoil back in a reproach into the face of him that shall urge it; and that is, that his great wisdom and the largeness of his heart might render such things dissatisfactory to him, in which very things others would find themselves happy enough; and that he might be too rigid an exactor of the *Philosophical* definition of happiness in his enjoyment, too curiously seeking to be happy by Book and Rule: that he might have found himself more happy if he had been less wise, or at least had not made use of his Wisdom to confuse his Felicity; but that he destroyed it by too severe an examination, as by putting our eyes too close to a curious Picture we deface to our selves its greatest beauty, and that when a man dreams pleasantly, it is folly to awaken himself.

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A. But to these things it is as obvious to reply, That it tends not to the honour of the Objectors, to be content to think themselves happy in such things as cannot make a wise man so; and to cleave unto for their felicity, what they must relinquish their wisdom to be able to believe it to be the thing they take it for, and that to think themselves happy they must renounce a true understanding. Happiness is too near a concern of immortal Souls, for them to be content to have it but in a delusion, and to dream of happiness cannot make us happy, unless we might be permitted to sleep for ever. And now the inference is easie, if we will be happy, we must look for that most desired thing out of this World, seek it by the direction of Gods Word, and be content that it be unseen, till Gods appointed time for it to be revealed: and it is more consonant to our very reason to look for blessedness above the reach of every mortal eye, and in a place of which no man in all the World hath been an eye-witness, than to lay the stress of our expectations upon an impossibility, and that confirmed to be so

by universal reason and experience, and divine authority. Or if it be not so, shew us one man whom this World hath made happy; enquire into the Records of all Times in all places, and produce his name, and ask the Sun if in all its travels it ever saw this sight: Indeed when ever we become considerate, we can every one tell our selves that it is an impossible thing; and our own experience, in every state we have had trial of, confirms the vanity and dissatisfaction of spirit, that intermingles with all worldly good, and justifies our reading, and makes good the allegations of our Books. We sensibly feel the loss of *Paradise* which we never saw, and are sure that we sojourn in a Wilderness by the Thorns and Briars that grow here.

And it will not relieve poor Man having lost with *Paradise* the All of Heaven we had here, to think to revenge himself on the place by slighting it, thinking (like disappointed Lovers) to remedy his loss by transferring his affections, and so make to himself Heaven here, by loving this World with affections due onely to that  
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bleſſed place, and to pleaſe himſelf; that having what he loves beſt, he hath his own choice ſtill, and doth but change his happineſs; and ſo by conforming his affections to his condition, makes void the curſe. For this while he forgets that it is not the leaſt part of the curſe to have ſuch degenerate affections, as to be put off with any thing but a real Heaven, and to take this World in exchange for it; for though we could (as in ſomefort we can) contract the dimensions of our own ſouls, and ſhut up their nobleſt powers in a ſtate of ſleep and inactivity, yea though we could leave our ſelves as little of the reaſonable nature as is neceſſary to make a contented Senſualiſt and Worldling; and the Sinner were able to become as little and ſorry a thing as he would, yet retaining but this little knowledge of himſelf, that here we have no abiding duration; he may aſſure himſelf he cannot be happy in this World, where he is permitted ſo ſhort a continuance: for he that can ſee beyond his ſuppoſed happineſs, may be aſſured in himſelf that he is not happy, for a ſhort and tranſitory happineſs

ness is a contradiction. What satisfaction of mind can that man have in the felicity of this present day, who cannot with any comfort think of to morrow? he that will be happy indeed, must be able to look comfortably before, below, and above him.

This is so obvious and plain a truth, that every one who ever takes such things into consideration, cannot but confess that there is no happiness that bears a just proportion to the nature of the soul in general, and more evidently to that excellent property of its immortality, but that onely which is reserved for the reward of our Faith and Obedience. Inconsiderate minds indeed, when they look on the splendor of the Rich and the Great, have their weak eyes so dazled with it, that they say (yet scarce knowing what they say) that is an happy man, or were I in his condition, I would make my self so; nothing that his heart can wish need he with-hold from himself; happy is the man that is in such a case. But the envid person feels the contrary in himself, and his conscience knows that he is envid unjustly, and he may be as sure in him-

himself that all his prosperity doth not make him a truly blessed man, as Alexander, though he had overlooked the conviction of his Sleep and Lust, might easily have discovered that he was no God.

But after all experience both of his own and others, after the most certain proofs, and most convictive reasons, the Sinner seeks and hopes for what he is sure never to find, and will be happy in despite of impossibility, he will have the cloud to be *Juno*, which he is sure is nothing else but a Cloud, that is, he bestows the same affections on things present, as are the unalienable right of those things in which our blessedness consists, and which very things we might have a right unto for affections worthy of them; for it makes or proves our right to Heaven to love it like it self. And again, the Sinner in pursuance of those less deserving things, lays out the same strength, zeal, and perseverance, as duly placed, have the promise of the thing in the very substance, whose shadow he earnestly, but vainly pursues; for that ought in reason to be something in what he hopes to be happy, on what he bestows  
the

the same estimation and affections, and after what he uses the same endeavours, as the true happiness requires, both as due to its merit, and as a condition of its attainment; for the Sinner might be happy at the same rate, as the experience costs him to prove himself mistaken.

Thus the foolish Sinner, after the lost pains and studies of all that ever attempted it, vainly seeks the impossible *quadrature* of a circle, to fix this present World on a square and basis which hath none; and with the merciless *Chymist* tortures Nature to confess the Gold that it hath not.

And again, the Sinner in pursuit of false and deluding things, lays out the **SECT.** only placed, have the promise of the thing in the very substance, whole shadow he cannot, but vainly pursues; for that ought in reason to be something in what he hopes to be happy, on what he believes



## SECT. VI.

**A** Nother *maxim* of Wisdom currant amongst all men which suffers in the practice of Sin, is, *That necessary things have an undoubted right of precedence before unnecessary ones.* Necessity is wont to speak to us with authority; it says to one Go, and he goes; to another Come, and he comes; to another Do this, and he doth it: it admits neither denial nor excuse, and save onely in case of our souls we are not wont to question its right to command us, and we need no teacher to inform us that we must do necessary things. Necessity is a Law to Prince, and doth not give them leave to dispute its Authority; and it is no shame to the greatest Minds to submit unto it; for it justifies the wisdom and honour of doing all that it commands, and for the most part gives abilities to do it; for it opens a Mine of concealed powers, making us to confess powers that we thought not our selves

to



Δυσίαντος δ' α-  
 νήσιν: ἔργον δ'  
 ναισι. Pynag.  
 carm. aur.

to have, and to exceed all our known abilities; and it will admit of a favourable sense that we can do all that we must, that is, in moral cases when the necessity displays it self to our minds in its full evidence and force, so that Sinners take a course first to baffle the necessity they mean to resist, and persuade themselves of the needlessness of conversion, and conceive vain hopes, and make a shift to believe it not to be so necessary as it is to repent, that they may be able to maintain their impotency to do good: before the necessity of saving our souls rightly stated and apprehended that impotency which they seem to be glad of for an excuse, will in great measure cease to be, and they would find themselves able to do things much beyond their ordinary strength, and in stead of wondering to find themselves able to do them, they will rather wonder that they were able not to do them so long, it being easier to right reason to keep the hardest of all Gods commandments, than to continue to resist so great a necessity. And  
 01 this

this principle (like the rest) is not a maxim of Policy reserved amongst the wise, nor a secret found amongst the remains of some subtle *Achitophel*, but it is a common rule of action amongst all men; every man being able to tell himself that necessary things must be done, and this is a ready answer to the solicitations of lesser things when they would obtrude themselves upon us; for without the observation of this rule we shall quickly disorder and perplex all our affairs, and necessity disobeyed becomes duly revenged on us in the necessary consequents of our disobedience. But in the case before us, where the necessity is greatest, we are ready to think every poor reason a justifiable excuse, and our Lord in the Parable of the Marriage, (*Luke 14. 18, 19.*) represents what little as well as vain excuses men send in answer, when they are expected to attend on the greatest necessity in all the World, that is, the necessity of saving their souls, a thing so supremely necessary, that nothing else is so besides it, at least not when compared with it, for says our Lord Christ in commendation of

*Maries*

*Maries choice, (Luke 10.42.) One thing is needful.* There is but one absolutely necessary thing in the World: We need not distract our minds, and divide our souls and hearts, and live doubtful, it is easie, to determine our choice, when there is but onely one great necessary thing; with which nothing whatsoever dares fairly dispute for pre-eminence, and it is by down-right and gross injustice that Sinners set such trifles before it, as the greatest worldly affairs compared with it appear to be; to make good which, I need onely repeat that the necessity I mean, is that of saving our souls; and what concern can be pretended to be so necessary as to be happy for ever? And it is so necessary not to perish everlastingly, that unless experience did otherwise inform us, we should certainly conclude that no reasonable creature need be withheld by the hands of some almighty fate from throwing himself into the bottomless pit. It is so necessary to save our souls, that the necessity thereof seems as inexorable as that of Fate; for how is it possible we should ever obtain it of our selves,

selves, to be content to be miserable for ever? To which purpose we may apply that observable note of *Hierocles* upon that saying of *Pythagoras*, cited in the Margin; *Δυνατώτα ὅτι τοῖς ἀφρονέουσιν ἢ τὸ νῦ ἀνάγκη ἢ ἔξωθεν βίας*: that is to say, *that a rational necessity is as forcible with every wise man as any external compulsion*, yea though it were a decree of Fate; for in so important a case as that before us, the necessity that presses us, carries in it an importunity that seems near as irresistible as Fate it self; and according to the Laws of Reason admits no more to be denied than the other to be withstood, and against it all pleas and excuses are as senseless and absurd, as against the other vain: and now it is but reasonable to bid temptations cease to solicit us, because we are in our wits, to bid them go and solicit souls (if any such there be) which disbelieve their own immortality; and to bid the Tempter go trie the power of his wiles in inticing the Sun and Moon from their courses; for the necessity of saving our souls, is in its kind, as great as that which keeps them to their

appointed Orbs, even the highest necessity that the reasonable nature as such, is capable to admit? Why do men ever complain that they are not necessitated to be happy, and that it is left in the power of their own wills to make themselves miserable! for in truth to live in everlasting felicity, and to avoid everlasting misery is so supremely necessary, that how can we think our selves at liberty to neglect it? and how can we conceive our selves free so to do? The importance of the thing contains in it a very forcible necessity, and we must break through I know not how many ties and bonds ere we can attain unto the freedom we complain of: Sinners err greatly in believing themselves to be so free as they think they are, to destroy themselves. Again, Why should they complain that it is in the power of their own wills to do themselves so great a mischief? when yet they seldom complain that it is in the power of their own hands to destroy their lives, or that Nature hath not enclosed the Sea with some Bulwark to prevent their running into and perishing in it; for the  
same

same thing, that is accounted good security in those cases, is not wanting in the other; namely, that they have a reasonable understanding, and a natural love to themselves: for what reason might not a man be trusted with his soul as well as his life, if in the case of his soul he did not allow himself to do unreasonable things? Thus far of the great necessity of saving our souls,

On the other part it remains for us to represent how an unnecessary thing Sin is; we may behold a specimen of the needlessness of it in the first transgression. What need had our first Parents to tear down fruit from a forbidden Tree, when but onely one was forbidden? having all the other Trees, and such variety of delicious fruits in Paradise both to feed and delight them, and but one Tree reserved for a proof of their obedience, and an acknowledgment of the right of the chief Lord of the Garden, their Creator, had they not allowed themselves a wanton curiosity and appetite? What necessity compelled them to attempt a Tree guarded against them with such a fearful threatening, as dreadful



as the Flaming Sword of the *Cherubim* that afterwards guarded all *Paradise*? They could have done but so if all had been forbidden them. What need had they to know more, when they had knowledge enough to know themselves to be happy in the love of their Creator, and in a liberal effusion of his blessings upon them? Greater was their rashness, and with less reason to be excused than that of *David's* Worthies, who brake through a whole Army of Enemies to fetch a draught of Water for their Lord, which he was able to spare; and therefore not worth the danger through which it was brought unto him. Such is the general needlessness of Sin, though the Sinner ventures hard for it, and breaks to it through a troop of mortal threatnings, yet for any real good or comfort he hath of it he might well spare it; else ask the man who hath truly repented, what miss he finds of the sins he hath forsaken? or what great uneasiness it is to be converted? or, which is the same, Ask the man that is recovered of his sickness, what miss he finds of his Fever or of his Dropsie?

or



or what loss it is to be recovered?

In particular, Sin is very unnecessary both to the being and well-being of our present life.

1. Sin is much more injurious than helpful to this present life. It was that first called Death from that poor nothing it was, and gave it an universal Empire over all the World, and continues still in many cases to do actual violence against the life of man; it was for Sin that our blessed Creator repented himself of the being he gave us, (*Gen. 6.6.*) and for sin threatens still to subtract from the number of our few years at most. In those extraordinary cases, which sometimes happen, wherein Life seems to need to take Sanctuary in a Sin, it is easie to tell our selves, that having in our prospect the reward of perseverance in well-doing, it is not necessary to live.

2. If man had never sinned till to his well-being it had been needful to sin, at this time we might have been delighting our selves in the Shades of *Paradise*, and the pleasures of Innocency; and amongst those happy Walks have had the frequent

and delightful conversation of Angels, and have enjoin'd immortal pleasures springing up spontaneously within us from the rectitude of all our faculties and the integrity of our whole nature; every look and every thought bringing in a pleasure, and these delights unexpressible increased from the continual influences and communications of Heaven upon holy souls. But how are we fallen? and this we owe to sin, which, after innumerable mischiefs it hath done to all mankind, it is hard to persuade most men that they are able to spare.

But what is the necessity of it, and whereunto doth it serve?

1. Is Sin necessary to serve us with pleasure? This is falsely to charge God with leaving us so bare of pleasure, that we should need, like Swine, to wallow in the mire for a pastime. What necessity of the pleasures of Sin, when we have allowed us so many lawful ones? whilst the visible and invisible Heavens minister to our delight, and we have so large a Field of Nature and Grace to walk in for our pleasure: whilst we have the beauty

ty of light to look on, and such variety of objects in nature to gratifie all our senses with a chaste delight, and that we are permitted the divine pleasure and transport of mind, in beholding the glory of the divine attributes shining forth in all the Creation! whilst there are so many exceeding great and precious promises and excellent truths in the Book of God, which entertain all our thoughts with pleasure in proportion to the strength of our Faith, and sanctity of our Affections; and that there is never an Article of our Creed but is apt to minister unto us so much pleasure, as he that hath it would not change for to revel never so many days and nights with a voluptuous *Anthony* and *Cleopatra*? To betake our selves to sin for pleasure, is to yield our selves to be bitten with the venomous *Tarantula*, to have the pleasure of laughing to death. We certainly are not kept so short of pleasure as to render it necessary to break to it over the fence of Gods Commandments, and it were a readier way to it to learn to understand better the right way of pleasure, and by purifying

our hearts to get the relish of the pleasures of Religion, which excel all those of Sin in the advantages of Cheapness and Innocence, of being more lasting and more satisfactory, and that is indeed more delightful.

2. Is there a necessity of Sin to serve to our ends of profit, and to mingle with our worldly affairs? So some deceive themselves; but this is a most vain persuasion, for Sin is the most unprofitable thing in the World; by the same door which it opens to Profit, it lets in an hungry Curse, which when it hath eaten up all the profit of the Sin, continues still its unallayed hunger. To sin is to sow Tares among all our Seed, and to plant our pleasant Gardens with Briars and Thistles. And it ought to be considerable to us, that it is an ill bargain to take any worldly good for the hire of a Sin which it cannot cancel; that is to run into a far greater debt for an estate, than the whole Estate is able to discharge: for we are not redeemed with such corruptible things, (1 Pet. 1. 13.) it were more accountable, if all the profit of Sin would

would be taken in compensation for the guilt ; but it is the highest folly to sin so cheap when we are redeemed so dear ; and that great Question of our Lord stands unanswered in its full force, *What is a man profited if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul ? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul ?* Mat. 16. 26. though so many have owed the satisfaction to themselves to disprove (if it were possible) a truth that at once upbraids and threatens them : But Sinners find it easier to flight and forget some great truths than to answer them. This shews the needlessness of Sin, it being as needless as it is for a man to let himself to be poorly hired to undo himself.

It is certain there can be none but a false necessity of Sin, we might all happily spare it, though it had never been brought into the World, we should never have had just reason of complaint, that that sweet dear beloved thing was wanting to our felicity ; we can spare it better than we can spare our very afflictions, of which we are more ready to complain, and under which more sensibly to groan ; these

these are medicinal things and therefore as much inferior to that in the degree of evil as a Remedy is to the Disease; but that is a fearful mortal sickness, and one that had good senses complains that the anguish belonging to it, is as if some mischievous accident had broken his bones; (*Psal.* 51.8.) and it is as needful to break ones Arm as to wound ones Conscience. In conclusion all the necessity of sin is onely this, Sinners humour their depraved appetites and dispositions, and in making provision for their Lusts feed their Diseases, and then they cannot spare their sins, not for any other want they have of them, but onely because they have vile affections.

**SECT.**

## SECT. VII.

**T**O continue a sinful life is to practise contradiction to that self-evident principle and dictate of the common Reason of Man; *That the greatest honour and first place in our account, intention, and endeavours, doth of right belong to the greatest good.* All the doubt to a wise man, when he is permitted his choice, is, not whether the best is to be chosen, but which is the best; and when the disparity is evident he ceases to doubt. We leave it to children to chuse a beautiful Apple before as much Gold as will buy the whole Plantation where it grew, but we cannot allow our selves such a childish election; but in the choice of the pleasures of Sin, we continue the same folly to grey hairs, and make all our days a choice that we would blush to own in any besides eternal concerns; for which the truest excuse that can be made, is this sad one, that it is but in the case of our souls, wherein

only



onely it seems pardonable not to do wisely, not (I hope) for this reason, that all eternity will be long enough to repent in. To make choice of Sin, a thing inconsistent with our eternal hopes, is to say to a work of darkness, *Sit thou there in a place of honour*; and to say to the joys of Heaven, *Stand ye there behind my back, or lie you there below my footstool*. If we do allow to the heavenly Kingdom an excellency surpassing all earthly good, and that the wisdom of our Creator hath done it but right in placing it above the earth we tread on, then what our Lord gave us in command, becomes a peremptory dictate of our own reason, namely, *first to seek the Kingdom of God*, St. Matth. 6.33. The possibility of the attainment thereof being added to its universally acknowledged excellency to seek any thing before it, and thereby in our account to displace the Creation, is so grossly unreasonable, that the most foolish actions that are to be found in the History of all the Lives in the World, are very unequal to that folly: and the man who in sacred Records sold his birthright to allay his present

present hunger; and the Prince who in prophane Story gave away his Kingdom to quench his thirst, may make a far better defence against the shame of their choice, than the prophane Sinner, who quits a comfortable prospect to Heaven in exchange for his Sin: for to retain his sins, is to make such a foolish exchange. In things not greatly material, or of no greatly different worth; we allow for the *peculiarity* of every mans fanſie, and easily pardon a mistake which it is easie to commit; but in things of great importance, and where the *disparity* is apparent, to make a wrong choice is infamous, and speaks him that makes it to be a Fool or Brute; onely Custom, which is able to do strange things, hath obtained, that in all cases pertaining to the World to come we may do the most unreasonable, that is, the most shameful things with little shame, and in case of eternity, not much endanger our reputation for wisdom by the most foolish choice: For though Wisdom can justify it self by the best arguments, yet Folly is defended by the greatest numbers, but it cannot but be it self still, a shameful thing, though

though it have so mighty numbers on its side as were able to drie up Rivers with the soles of their feet; and Wisdom, though left alone in the person of one single *Eliab*, (as he once supposed) though her children that do justifie her be never so few in number; yet is its own justification. For Wisdom and Folly in the choice before us, are as evident as the light, and as discernible one from the other as light from darkness, to distinguish which, there is no need of any great skill; and it is onely requisite not to be blind; for there is no just comparison at all between the things in competition for our choice, so that it is necessary not to know or to forget the Heavenly blessedness, to take advantage of its distance and invisibility to be able to neglect it, and to make our choice without comparing the things to be chosen; for what comparison is there between a day and a thousand years, yea ten thousand Ages, between light which glimmers in a coal which is but bright enough to make it self discernible, and light which shines in the Sun and clears all the World? What  
comparison

comparison between a little dead Water in a Cistern, and a Spring of living Water that ever flows without either cessation or end? Such, nay less than such is the comparison between Earth and Heaven; between either lawful or unlawful pleasures here, and *those rivers of pleasure and life which flow at the right hand, and from the throne of God and of the Lamb for evermore.* (Psal. 16. 11. Rev. 22. 1.)

How can the pleasures of Sin which are but for a season, abide a comparison with the eternal joys and glory to be revealed? Is it not beyond all difficulty and doubt, better to rejoice eternally for great and substantial causes, and most satisfactory reasons, than to laugh on now a little time, and with as little reason in a forced Mirth, and with the Conscience that there is no such cause of joy, but rather to mourn and to lament, and with many a misgiving thought accusing the Sinner for rejoicing unjustly?

We shall more evidently discover the inequality of the comparison, and more fully convince the Sinner of the folly and shame of such an unreasonable choice; if

if we consider distinctly the things in competition, taking into examination what is to be known of the blessedness to come, and what may be pleaded and alledged in favour, defence, or excuse of a sinful life : and having placed both in our open view we may desire the Sinner to ask himself, whether in reason that blessed state ought to be slighted ; or the pleasures of Sin doth not cost too dear at the price of so much blessedness slighted and put away from him for their sakes ?

1. Concerning the everlasting blessedness, towards the discovery of its Excellency in our present enquiry is, What it is ? that it is, being a principal Article of the Christian Faith, and attested by all the proof and evidence as Faith would desire to have, to warrant and justifie it self by : as hath been abundantly made good by many excellent Authors, to the full confutation of infidelity, to which Sin is fain to fly so fast for shelter, whilst the main pillars of that Sanctuary are beaten down about its head : and now the Sinner may take his choice, whether he will force his understang, or forsake it ? that is, whether

ther he will force himself to disbelieve against irresistible evidence, or whether he will chuse to live and practise contrary to mighty reasons?

And to dispose us to the belief of the future state of blessedness, it is worth our observation, that in our own nature we have some indication of some such good that we are intended for, and from the knowledge of our selves we may infer that Heaven ought to be; for if we allow Man to be made in that wisdom, which we discover in the *accommodation* of other parts of the Creation to their appointed ends, we may be sure by the largeness of our minds and hearts that our good and wise Creator intended us for some greater happiness, than it is possible by all our wisdom to extract out of this World; else our knowledge serves but to increase our sorrow, and our thoughts given us (as we might well think) to soar above, being able in their ascent to vie swiftness with the wings of an Angel, could serve onely to give us this uncomfortable information, that we are not happy, having we know not how many dimensions of

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our souls to spare, and being by the disproportion of our faculties to our enjoyments condemned to eternal dissatisfaction. But God hath provided better for us, and designed us for a felicity answerable to the boundless appetites of our souls, and widest capacities of our Nature.

But to suppose that this state of blessedness is, and that it is certainly to come; it is more material to our purpose to enquire what it is, and yet that we must be content in great part not to know. It is a disadvantage to the blessedness we are speaking to be so far out of sight, and in so great measure unknown; as it would lessen the glory of the Sun to us never to have been seen from behind a Cloud; but God will have us have the exercise, and himself the honour of our Faith, and a clear perceptive knowledge would turn it into present fruition, and so disturb the order of things, and let down Heaven below; for we cannot know such things and at the same time not enjoy them, and eternal life is to know God and Jesus Christ our Lord, *John 17. 3. in the Paradise*



Paradise above knowledge and life spring out of the same stock and root. But that those most excellent things must continue in great part unknown to us in this our mortal state tends not more to their prejudice, than the immediate reason of their being so redounds to their honour; and that is their excellency and glory, for which they cannot admit of the inspection of any unperfected understanding; and if they could be better known to us here, for that very reason they must needs have been so much less excellent. And we must allow them to be very excellent things, whose excellency upbraids the poverty of our Tongues and Thoughts, as being too great for our Tongues to express or our Minds to conceive; for we are permitted to raise our expectations to an height to which our thoughts cannot reach, and to design and hope beyond all our possible imagination. Nor ought the imperfection of our knowledge of the future blessedness, and inability of our understanding to soar into those heights to lessen our account thereof; for,

1. So much we do know of it as speaks

it to be the noblest and wisest design in the World to press towards it, all that we know of it is all excellency, and the more we know, the more we desire and love: but the more knowledge and experience we have of things and pleasures here, the more proof we have of the vanity that inseparably belongs to them.

2. So much of the state of blessedness to come is to be known, as proves it evidently to be a most unreasonable thing to sin to the prejudice of such a blessed hope; and that he who will not be persuaded out of his sins, had need go seek a place to act them in, where he may have no prospect of Heaven, which upbraids his folly, as well as suffers his affronts.

3. From so much as is to be known of it we may assure our selves that none of those things which are wont to seduce our affections from it are able to abide a comparison with it; for to a mind warm in the contemplation thereof, how worthy to be despised looks all the pleasure of Sin? and then how undeserving the account that is made of them do those things look, which by a joint consent in error, men  
have

have in the greatest admiration? when we consider Heaven, what is this Earth?

4. So much is to be known of it as renders it inexcusable to have but cold affections, and to make but weak essays towards it, and to take the ordinary discouragements, or to think to defend our neglects of it from any of the common topics of excuse, with which Sinners make a poor shift to excuse themselves; so that we ought to think it a very importunate temptation that would not take this for an answer, I cannot so easily relinquish eternal blessedness.

5. So much of it is to be known, as is enough to justify the wisdom of complying with all the appointed means towards such an excellent end, even those known by the hard and despised names of Repentance, and Conversion, of Mortification and Self-denial, of Fear and Humility; and we need no other justification of the wisdom of keeping all Gods Commandments; yea, it is enough to justify the wisdom of Apostles, Prophets and Martyrs, in doing and suffering so many hard things, in forsaking all that the

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World hath to endear, it self to us, and exposing themselves to so many evils as must needs have been a burden too heavy for any to bear, but such onely as had the encouragement of this blessed reward; for allow but as much of Heaven as hath been possible to be told us, and even amidst all their sufferings they were both happier and wiser than their enemies in all their prosperity. So much knowledge we may have of the blessedness to be revealed, as ought to have so much influence upon our account, affections, and lives, as we have now declared: For we know that *we shall see God*, and that therefore *we shall be like him*, (1 Job. 3. 2.) that *we shall be where Christ our Lord is*, and *behold his glory*, (Job. 17. 24.) and be made conformable thereunto, and in beholding, derive it upon, and into our selves. We know on the certainty of the divine promises, that *our corruptible shall put on incorruption*, and *our mortal immortality*, (1 Cor. 15. 34) and all imperfection be done away from us, and our very bodies so changed to the nature of the place where we are to inhabit; that they may be cal-

led spiritual and heavenly, and shall no more weary and depress our vigorous souls in their divine operations, than the wings of a Cherubim load him in his flight; and that the children of God in the Resurrection, in several respects shall become equal to the Angels, Luke 20. 36. Again, we know that those that are wise (so wise as to make timely a wise choice, and to despise the pleasures of Sin in pursuance of these hopes) shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, (Dan. 12. 3.) and the righteous shall shine forth as the Sun in the kingdom of their Father, (Matt. 13. 43.) and that having our conversation in Heaven, as looking from thence for the Saviour the Lord Jesus Christ, he will change our vile body, and fashion it like unto his glorious body, (Phil. 3. 20, 21.) And now we may conclude, that though we are taught that it is but little of the happiness to come that we are capable to know in this mortal state; yet this little is in it self a great thing, and in any one single notion in which it is told us, it is worth all the conditions of its attainment.

But besides what is expressly told us in

the Word of God, we are likewise told in *equivalent* words, or may gather by indisputable inference from the Word of God, that in that happy state there shall be so compleat happiness, that there shall be no room left for a wish, to desire to be or have any thing, but what then we shall be and have; having no faculty but what shall have its utmost and most agreeable gratification, and every capacity replenished with its most proper good: and that the capacities of our souls, which we sensibly perceive to be too wide for all this World, shall yet be further enlarged and made more capacious, that we may be able to live in so much happiness, to abide the immediate emanations of the love of God, and to sustain the eternal weight of Glory, (1 Joh. 3.2.) for though it doth not yet appear what we shall be, yet we know we must in our natures be enlarged far beyond what now we are, or else we should be oppressed under the felicity and glory promised unto us, and that we must be what now we are not, being promised *to see God*.

And now being permitted such blessed hopes,



hopes, it is a most agreeable thing that good men should in some measure *anticipate* the joys to come, *rejoicing in hope of the glory of God*; Rom. 5.2. for it is natural for hope to give some taste of the thing hoped for; and it is no little prerogative of the reasonable Nature to partake of remote joys, and to make things minister to our delight removed from us by mighty distances of time and place; yea, so attractive of Pleasure is Hope, that in worldly matters it is still disputed, whether hope or fruition be most delightful? This we are sure of, our worldly hopes drein away the pleasure of the fruition, that when a man comes to the enjoyment, he misses so much of the pleasure, as he anticipated in hope; but it is not so in the divine Hope we are speaking of, for the most delightful *anticipations* shall leave all the joys entire. It is not here as in worldly good things, where the spirits *evaporate* in the vent that is made for hope to taste, and the pleasure in good part exhausted in *previous* expectations, and a mans own thoughts do beguile him before of the promised satisfaction; he enjoys the expected



pected good most deliciously in hope, and then the felicity proving unequal to his expectations, the possession destroys more pleasure than it brings, and rather undoes his hopes than compleats them: but in the blessedness to come no *previous* joy that hope borrows of it, makes it at all the less, and no anticipation of it takes away any thing from it: it is so *commensurate* to the greatest hopes, that the fruition doth not onely make good, but infinitely exceed all possible expectation; it is far greatest in the enjoyment, and loses nothing by being enjoyed, the fruition never so long continued takes away nothing from the pleasure, and leaves as much blessedness to come as when it first began; as the Sun hath not at all wasted its light by so long and so liberal *effusions* of it over all the World: So that the blessed after the longest enjoyment of this happy state, as the mind of man can conceive, shall desire no change of pleasure, for the fresh joy that springs ever from eternal objects, supplies the delightfulness of change, so that it is impossible to desire any greater good than to have the

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the pleasures in eternity to continue to be the same for ever.

It further shews a great excellency of that blessedness, that the enjoyments reserved there for us, are the same that satisfy the more capacious spirits of the Angels of God, and constitute the blessedness of Natures so much transcending ours. *Seraphims and Cherubims* are adequately blessed in the same enjoyments, as there is so much difficulty to persuade Man to look toward, or think on; and there is scarce any thing in the World made less account of, than what is the matter of the eternal *Hallelujahs* of those glorious Spirits.

And however Sin hath insinuated it self into mens affections, and is become as dear to some of them as their own souls, yet it is not the least part of the eternal blessedness, to be perfectly freed from it, and reinstated in perfect innocence; for sin is so unnecessary to compleat happiness, that it is inconsistent with it; for there shall be no remaining depravity in our Natures, or any new contracted guilt to eclipse the face of God from us, or to deject ours, and make our countenance fallen before him:

him: we shall have nothing in us displeasing to him; nothing but what renders us meet objects of the divine complacency, that he shall love in us his own likeness, and we never have reason to be displeased, offended, grieved, troubled at, or to dislike our selves for ever, but see matter to like, and to take eternal complacency in our selves, being made so thoroughly conformable to him.

Not onely because by earthly representations heavenly things best insinuate themselves into our affections, but also because for the transcendency of their nature to our present capacities, their proper character would strike our minds with so great a lustre as would rather dazle and confound than enlighten them, God both in wisdom and goodness is pleased to give us the representation of the blessedness to come in the figure of earthly things, speaking to us in the language of the children of men: we know not the proper names of celestial things, nor have we any words expressive of the *glory to be revealed*; and *S. Paul* witnesses that the language of eternity is not to be spoken

spoken below, and the words which he heard in the *third heavens* (2 Cor. 12. 4.) he left them all upon the place. But God in condescension to our weakness makes Heaven stoop down unto us in the types of such things as are of best account in this World; so that the Ambitious, the Covetous, the Voluptuous may find under the names of things most dear to them, the things in reality whose shadows they have in their chase; even Honour, Riches, Pleasures indeed, to which the things called by those names with us, are but very dreams. It is some favour to our present weakness, but a disadvantage to the real excellency of those things, to have their description given in the figure of such things as Religion teaches us to set low in our account; and our affections are drawn towards them by the names of such things, which it would be no such great part of wisdom to be content to want, if they did in any good measure answer to the excellency of those things, to the representation of which they for want of better are made to serve. But we must abstract the grossness and earthiness of

of the types and figures from the *Ideas* or conceptions we frame by them in our minds of heavenly things, and in our conceivings, supply them with perfections best known to mortality by their contraries.

It is further considerable that the most splendid and illustrious and excellent things with us are made the types of those great things, which are so earnestly recommended to us for our design, and promised to us for the reward of our obedience: for that blessed state is figured by the name of a Feast, which denotes a confluence of delicacies; and of a Marriage, where to the pleasures of a Feast, are superadded such other delights as of custom were wont to attend such a joyous solemnity; and the entertainment is not onely provision but pleasure too; where the chief business of the Guest is to rejoice, at once to contribute to, and share in the common joy.

But this comes short of other things of far more precious and honourable names by which this state of blessedness is figured to us; as by the illustrious  
name

name of a *Crown*, the most splendid thing below the Sun, and a thing as much accounted of, as if it were made up of the quintessence of all inferiour good; a thing which the greatest minds think worthy of themselves; but yet they that wear it say it loads as well as adorns, and complain too that Death forces them too soon to resign it: but the *Crown* in the promise is all brightness without any pressure, all glory that hath the richness of gold without the uneasiness of its weight, and encircles the heads of the blessed with a divine splendour without the least oppression of their temples; and for its incorruptibility it weighs down all other Crowns, for no time shall ever canker or impair it, or make any of its glory to fade; neither shall they ever resign it to any Usurper or Heir; for the blessed enjoy their blessedness, and reign in peace for ever, without any Enemy or Successor.

This state of blessedness is likewise recommended to us under the name of a *Kingdom*, and that *immovable* and *eternal*. A *Kingdom* it is where every Inhabitant

weaves



weaves a Crown, for there are none there but crowned heads: and every soul in glory enjoys in his capacities the whole Kingdom; as much as if all heaven were all his own, as indeed it is so; that is, so far as he is capable to have, and to enjoy it: as every man hath as much benefit of the Sun, as if none else had any share in it besides himself; as if, as to *Adam* once, it shined to none but to him alone, and rose every day but onely for his sake; all the whole Kingdom serves unto his joy and felicity, and there is no separate part of Heaven of which he is forbidden the delight, and to take any pleasure that his capacities enable him to partake of.

But all this is but little to what remains behind to be spoken, and much less to what remains impossible for us to speak or conceive: the most comprehensive notion we have been taught of the blessedness to come, is that of seeing God, (*Matt. 5. 8.*) the *beatitudo* promised to the pure in heart, and of seeing him as he is, (*1 Job. 3. 2.*) where sight includes enjoyment, to see God is in seeing him to taste, and our souls to feed on;



on, and be replenished with all the divine goodness, sweetness, loveliness, excellency, and glory; it is in seeing him to enjoy in the measures of finite Creatures, the same blessedness in which God himself is blessed, to enjoy in him the same pleasure that he enjoys in himself, who is both ours and his own blessedness, for to enjoy himself is an happiness *adequate* to the infiniteness of his nature: and further to see him, is in seeing to be united unto him in the nearest and most delightful union, as the faculties of our souls unite with, embrace and rest in the embraces of their most agreeable, most desired, and most beloved objects. And again, to see God is so great happiness, that to be capable of that *beatifical sight* supposes us to be put into a state of unimaginable perfection: For to enjoy the divine perfections we must first partake of them, that is, be like God, that we may see him, and have in our selves the likeness of the same perfections, and be changed into the likeness of the same glory, which we shall be ravished to see in God; and how like God we must be to be capable

to see him as he is, S. *John* intimates is not now to be known, onely this is certain, that we must be like him. How near like to Angels must we be to sit at their Feast, and to taste their pleasures, and to join in consort with their Songs? and likewise must we be like God to be capable to see and enjoy him: for how can such a communion and friendship as is between God and the Blessed be between different, and consequently disagreeing Natures? How fruitful of pleasure the sight of God is? what tongue can tell, or whose heart conceive? For what a flood of joy must needs flow into our spirits made perfect in the intuition of that excellent glory, light, majesty, beauty, wisdom and love which we shall see in the face of God, having all our capacities filled, and all our faculties delighted and ravished with the divine communications? and who can conceive how far God can and will communicate himself to the Blessed, and what pleasure must needs accompany such an immediate participation of, and conjunction with the supreme goodness?

It hath been the opinion of wise men,  
that

that if Vertue were equally discernible with sensible excellencies, it would appear to be far more beautiful: and if from a compofure of colours laid over a little mafs of flefh, with organs and parts diversified in a due proportion by a divine skill, there results fo much beauty as is able to detain the eyes of Monarchs and Conquerors, and endangers beholders to betray their reason to its charms: what wonders of beauty are there to be feen in the infinite wifdom, goodnefs, and holinefs, and all the divine excellencies evidently conspicuous in the *beatifical vifion*, when we fhall fee God as he is: for let us conceive all the diffused ways of beauty fcattered over all the Creation, to be united in one moft lovely object: and all the fcattered particles of good united in one common center of goodnefs; and all the fcattered excellencies over all the World abftracted from the imperfections which adhere to them, and gathered together in one, in the greateft purity and perfection, and yet then we come fhort of a juft refemblance of the infinitely more transcending beauty, goodnefs, and excellency

lency that shine in their full glory in the face of God, who is the original and fountain of all that is worthy to be desired and worthy to be loved; from whom it first sprung, and where it still is in its greatest eminency; for he hath not the less in himself for all the communications of his goodness to all his Creatures.

If there be such a beauty in the light that flows from the Sun as is a pleasure to behold; and if that light scatters a sensible delight over all the World, how shall we be transported to behold that light which is the emanation or breaking forth of the glory of God throughout all the regions of the Blessed, in which light all spiritual beauties and excellencies display, open and unfold themselves to our sight in their proper natures: for that light equally discovers things visible and invisible, and gives us the open sight of all the invisible World. And how shall we be transported with the sight when a new World of ravishing and glorious wonders shall be disclosed to our open view? and what that light is which discloses all spiritual excellencies in that evidence in  
which

which they are to be seen in Heaven, in which spiritual natures behold, know, and converse with one another, who is able to imagine? or whether we have any concealed powers and faculties in our nature that shall open and manifest forth themselves at the breaking forth of this light upon us; or that our known ones shall be advanced to that perfection, that all spiritual objects shall become as conspicuous to them as light it self. What that light is in which we shall have an open sight of the invisible World, we can no more explain, than a man born blind is able to describe the beauty of the light of this World, and to praise the Sun which he never saw, to praise which worthily it is so necessary to have seen it.

It is likewise promised in the Scripture as a principal and very desirable part of the blessedness to come to be with Christ, (*Phil. 1. 23.*) which is a felicity that *S. Paul* accounts worth dying for, and never to see the Sun more; to be with him is a great thing in the strictest sense, as it signifies the being admitted to his sight and presence, and a fellowship with him:

though it further implies a participation of the same glory to which he is advanced, the Blessed being coheirs with him to Heaven, (*Rom. 8.17.*) and when he prays that his elect may be where he is, that *they may behold his glory*, (*Joh. 17.24.*) the meaning thereof is, that in beholding it they may partake of it too, for he had said but a very little before, that he had given it unto them: (*v. 22.*) but to be where he is, and to enjoy the sight of him, and fellowship with him, cannot but be thought a great happiness in the sight of all such who do persist in loving, desiring, and pressing towards him, and imitating in some good measures his holy example, in hope to see him and be with him. If it was a light so worthy to be desired to see him in the days of his flesh, that it was the desire of many Prophets and Kings? and if it was enough to make glad the heart of the great Patriarch to see him afar off in the promise? if the obscure sight we have of him in his Gospel, and in the means he makes use of for the manifestation of himself to the souls of the Faithful, be so delightful as it is; how much



much more delightful a sight will it be, to see him face to face in Heaven, in his state of exaltation at his Fathers right hand, crowned with glory and honour? a sight that will not onely justifie but transcend the greatest love, the most ardent desires, and the highest honour that ever entered into our hearts to conceive to him.

The company of some excellent persons to minds capable of such conversation, ministers some of the best pleasure here below, how much greater pleasure must it be to be with Christ the most excellent person of which the humane nature can make its boast, and endeared to our souls by names of special relation, and acts of the greatest love? and how joyful will it be to see the same love of his to us, in his smiles and gracious aspects upon us, and most ravishing compellations of us; as he once expressed in the groans of his Agony, practised on his Cross, and sealed with his Death: to see him delighting in us, the travail of his soul, the fruit of his humiliation, and the purchase of his sufferings; we mutually taking eternal de-



light in him, the author of our eternal redemption, who loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood: to whom be glory and dominion for ever and ever, Amen.

Rev. I. 5.

And all the company and conversation we shall have in Heaven, whether of Angels or Saints shall minister pleasures to us worthy of that blessed place; with what pleasure shall we behold the innumerable host of Angels, those excellent spirits and lovers of us men, resplendent in their faces, with the glorious excellencies of their own nature, and on their heads with the additional signatures and donatives of the divine grace and favour? We think the *Patriarchs* happy in having sometimes an Angel or two for their Guests, and conversing face to face with those great Ministers and Favourites of the Court of Heaven, even then when in compliance with their weakness, they were fain to lay aside their native glory, and to divest themselves of those splendid rays, in which otherwise they ought to shine, and shew themselves in the humble appearance of frail Man. How great a pleasure

pleasure then will it be for us to enjoy a perpetual fellowship with those glorious Spirits in all their glory, we our selves being made meet for such excellent conversation? for to make all the conversation there most agreeable, men too in glory shall be as the Angels of God.

Next, what delightful company shall we be to each other, when we shall be perfected in wisdom and goodness, peculiar excellencies to make conversation delightful? What reciprocal pleasure the celestial inhabitants shall find in each other, we may conceive from that transport of pleasure which befel the three select Disciples upon the appearing of *Moses* and *Elias* in some of their glory; so that *S. Peter* in an *extase* of joy could be content to quit all the World to live in that holy Mount, if those blessed souls would take up their abode in the Tabernacles, he would fain build for them, in hopes to keep them there. In those happy regions we shall live in the most delightful society and friendship with all the numbers of the blessed, with those most renowned

renowned Worthies, whose great piety, and more than humane courage and excellent wisdom we were wont to celebrate, and whose names and memories to love, and by whose examples to excite our selves to do things worthy of the partakers of the same promises, of the same faith and hope; and we shall there see and enjoy them in all perfections and graces far exceeding themselves that were, being perfected and glorified: we our selves too being made meet for that glorious society to which we shall be admitted.

I have allowed my self a liberty here to expatiate beyond the just bounds of an argument, yet I could not easily make a more pardonable digression, nor lose my way to stray upon a better place. But why should I study an Apology, when I have so just a defence, as that all this Discourse of the blessedness to come, is all the way a reproof of the Sinner, and a plain conviction of the foolishness of his choice? I say every part of the description of this neglected happiness, loudly upbraids the madness of him that neglects it; and for such poor reason as  
the

the sorry base pleasure of living ungodly : For to do like men, that is, like intelligent Natures, having so great an happiness in the promise, we ought readily to frame it into our greatest, yea onely design ; and make an estimate of all things by their *Subserviency*, or *Repugnancy* to this most excellent end ; and to have any thing whatsoever offered to us in competition with it, we ought to account an affront to our wisdom ; for according to all right reason the greatest good ought to stand highest in our account, and where there is no just comparison we ought not to dispute the choice ; but there is no principle of Reason or *maxim* of Wisdom but men will do violence unto, when it stands in the way of their sins ; and they part with such glorious hopes for such little reasons, as is a shame to alledge, and it is a reproach to mankind to tell how shamefully so great a part of them are abused by the Tempter and themselves ; and to examine how little they have to shew in exchange for their greatest good :

good: but this will become more apparent in producing the most, that is, indeed the little that can be laid in the behalf of a sinful life, and in comparing all the pleasure thereof with the before-described Blessedness; to all the reasonable hopes whereof it is so impossible to reconcile it; and this is the matter of the following Section.

**SECT.**

in the way of their sins; and they part with such glorious hopes for such little reasons as is a shame to shedge, and it is a reproach to mankind to tell how

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clouded by the Tempter and themselves; and to examine how little they have to show in exchange for their greatest

## SECT. VIII.

**T**O produce the plea of Sinners in defence of their choice, doth but render it more conspicuously foolish; and the best praises they are able to give of the pleasures of Sin, are so poor and low, that they may serve for reproaches, and do evidently confute the account in which they have them; for thereupon there naturally results this fatal question, And is this all they have to quit the delightful prospect of the upper World? If the pleasures of Sin were lawful ones, yet they were but poor things to men that have souls, and do believe the holy Scriptures: If Sin were innocent, yet it could contribute but little to the felicity of heavenly and immortal Natures: And let us for once suppose all those impossibilities which the Sinner is concerned to wish, and would be a mighty ease for him to believe; and in the midst of his golden wishes, he shall be but a poor sorry thing,

thing, and below the envy of the least of good men: let us suppose that Religion is but the *product* of strong fears, or as great hopes; that beyond the confines of this visible World there is but onely an infinite void nothing; that humane souls are but a meer temperament; that all the bounds between good and evil be thrown down; and things being reduced to that imaginary state of Nature, before mutual contract had made Vertues, (the World, as it seems, not being able to subsist without them) all things be lawful to all men; that all that is of us be mortal, and to perish after the manner of Beasts; and Man, whilest he lives, may chuse to be what Beast he will. Place the Sinner thus in all his *imaginary* felicity, and in the most unrestrained freedom to Sin, he shall be but poorly blessed: and had he an indulgence to break all Gods Commandments, even that would not make him an happy man. If Infidelity were in the right, the Sinner were unhappy still; for all he could get by a supposed confutation of our Creed, would be onely the pleasure to become as vain as he will, and  
not



not to see his pleasures shamefully disparaged by the unequal comparison of those immortal ones, which *Infidelity* pretends to destroy. But the very truth is, that amidst never so many Vices ministring to the pleasure of a Sinner, he is but like the man, who by unlawful arts hath obtained the Services of evil Spirits, and thinks it brave to be attended on by *Fiends*, but expects in the end that they will tear him in pieces.

What valuable consideration on the part of a sinful life to oppose against the forsaken blessedness of the life to come, is hard to imagine; and to produce the Sinners strongest arguments is but to shew for what poor reasons he submits to be undone.

But oh (say they) the pleasures of Sin! what charms hath it; delusions so pleasing, that they chuse rather to err with Sin, than to be in the right with their Bibles; and they are not ashamed to be so pleasantly misled. Invincibly argued! An Argument doubtless able to justify the wisdom of drinking known deadly poison, because of the deliciousness of the

the Wine in which it is given. But must we allow it them for a granted case, that the introducing of Sin into the World hath mended our pleasures? and that the best way of pleasure had still been unknown, had not our first Parents without frightening themselves with dismal *consequences*, ventured boldly on the delightful fruit, not disquieting themselves with that poor scruple, that it was a venture of immortal consequence, and that the Tempter hath obliged Mankind by being to them the Author of a thing so fruitful of pleasure as they pretend Sin to be. Such incredibilities as these the Sinner must admit, who undertakes the defence of the cause of Sin. But indeed wretched is that man, who owes his chief delights to the Fall, and in the same mind he is of now, would have been much troubled for pleasure in a state of innocence. But say, what is this great pleasure of Sin, that it seems so full of temptation? It is nothing else but a *transient* short gratification of some depraved and vile affection, to have subdued which is a greater pleasure than to gratifie it: or of some

unrea-

unreasonable appetite, which is soon satiated and cloyed with the gratification it craves for. And are these pleasures which the dying Sinner in his last advice can think fit to recommend to his childrens practice? and whilest he lives shew his paternal affection, by teaching them the use and ways of such forbidden delights? And will it be the joy and comfort of his old Age to see his children well settled and improved in those courses which no hopes or fears can prevail on him to leave? If not, is he envious to them, or unnatural to himself? But though he cannot answer objections, yet he promises himself great satisfaction in the fruition of his sinful desires, and he hath a *fugitive* felicity in his eye, which he can never overtake; and he may assume the *Scepticks* Motto, *Οὐ κατὰ λαμ-  
βάνω*, *I cannot take hold of it*, it always escapes from me. And well it may; for the felicity he proposes to himself in his sins is nothing else but a shadow in his vain imagination.

But to represent the plea of the Sinner with the best advantage, and to allow

him his defence in the best *artifice* that our invention can suggest, we may conceive him arguing thus; "That in casting  
"off the strict restraints of Religion and  
"Fear, and in throwing aside the distinction of Lawful and Unlawful, he enjoys the World the more deliciously,  
"and makes it confess pleasures it will not  
"be known of to such who make profession of having mortified affections to  
"it; that the Vertuous do wilfully weaken (which they call moderating) their  
"pleasures here, and give a great check  
"to their own delight, in considering  
"too severely the vanity and transitoriness of the things that should delight  
"them: and that they spoil the mirth of  
"their Tables with their Deaths head,  
"and deface beauty to themselves, in  
"imagining what spoil Time will make  
"of it; and so they discourteously make  
"the fair to anticipate their wrinkles;  
"whilest the Sinner feasting without fear,  
"enjoys an especial voluptuousness in the  
"World; and in stead of that holy art  
"which the Vertuous profess of moderating the fruition of things present, he  
"heightens

“heightens it by an airy briskness of imagination, and in the imaginary presumption of an active fanſie, he forces more delight to himſelf out of the World, than that indeed hath to give; and cheats himſelf into pleaſure, and enjoys all the happineſs he cares for in *deuſion*, not doing himſelf the diſcourſie to examine, whether his pleaſures are rational, nor how long they can laſt, nor what is like to be their end?

Theſe are the beſt praiſes I can well deviſe for thoſe deluding pleaſures, which are made to confront the eternal joys; and yet there is nothing in all this *Economy*, but what evidently confutes it ſelf; For it is eaſie to reply,

I. That the man is hard put to it for pleaſure, who is fain to make ſhift with ſuch, whoſe nature and end if he examines, he ſpoils them; and when they are conſidered, ceaſe to be; like *Phantaſms* of the night, which vaniſh at the opening of the day; and to keep which the Sinner muſt ſtop all the avenues of light, and be ſure to think never a wiſe thought, eſpecially not of any above, or below, or to come;

unless he sharpen his appetite to pleasure with this odd consideration, that he must expect none after he is dead. (*Isa. 22. 13. 1 Cor. 15. 32.*) Those cannot but be very worthless pleasures which are inconsistent with the wisest and best advised thoughts as can enter into the heart of man, and to enjoy which it is needful to forget God.

2. There is a gross mistake in that allegation, that to exclude Religion and the Fear of God, betters the pleasures of our enjoyments here. It is but a wild frantick and brutal pleasure that is to be extracted or forced out of sin, a transient blaze that goes out in a smoak. The vertuous and pious enjoyment of these earthly good things is ever the most satisfactorily comfortable; for it gives a pleasant relish and deliciousness to our present delights, when at the same time we practise a vertue, and enjoy a pleasure; and so transmit the delight from our senses to our souls; when in the fruition of these mercies of God, we have a savoury relish of the divine goodness to which we owe them; and so in our temporal enjoy-

enjoyments have a composition both of Earth and Heaven. A pleasure in the fruition of which we heartily praise God, is exceedingly more delightful than any forbidden one, in which it is no comfort to think of him. And all Philosophy hath ever attested that temperance and moderation, and wisdom in prescribing laws to pleasure, best secure it. He that gave the name to *Epicurism*, though he thought vertue scarce good for any thing else, yet had a value for it, as being conducive to pleasure. Let no man tell us that a superficial taste of pleasure misses the deliciousness at the bottom: For with better reason we can tell him, that he who drinks too deep, partakes of a mixture of dregs; which settle at the bottom of all worldly pleasure: when we are past the measures of just and lawful, and wise, it runs feculent and impure, and tastes brackish of the Sin which mingles with it.

3. But though we should allow them that sin makes as much pleasure as they pretend, that the ungodly are the merriest part of the World, or rather that



they seem so to be: For that they laugh loudest, and have their pleasures attended with most pageantry and noise; allow them to be able to rejoice heartily and causlessly at once, and to be able to be ten times as merry as they have any reason for, to be able to silence the reproofs of their conscience, which otherwise would disturb their mirth; and to continue to be always merry or busie, that they may have no leisure to think and to be sad; allow them to have an art to be able never to lay any thing to heart that may disquiet them; and to put away all sorrow, not onely though it be reasonable and just, but though it be too never so beneficial and necessary; and grant them any thing they know better to recommend the pleasures they are concerned in. And what is there material in all that is pretended to oppose against the blessedness before described? and to countervail that inestimable loss? What Sinner had ever impudence enough to pretend a comparison? and indeed his choice is best made without comparing, and it is requisite for him to keep that blessed-

blessedness quite out of sight, and forget  
 if not disbelieve it altogether, if he will  
 enjoy the comfort of his contrary choice.  
 For, how unequal is the comparison?  
 What comparison is there between this  
 vast Globe of the World, and a weak  
 Bubble blown up by a little breath, and  
 presently vanishing into a little undiscer-  
 nible Air? What comparison between  
 those glorious Stars that so beautifully  
 adorn the visible Heavens, and a few spar-  
 kles of Fire that after one single frisk die  
 away into almost very nothing? So un-  
 equal is the comparison between the  
 Eternal Blessedness and the Pleasures of  
 Sin.

But there is one thing behind which  
 the Sinner will be sure to alledge, in hopes  
 it may be admitted for some *extenuation*  
 of the folly of his ways, and that is,  
 that we cannot deny him this advantage  
 beyond the heirs of the promises, that he  
 hath his pleasures in present fruition; but  
 Heaven is a remote place, and it is hard  
 and bare living by Faith, and upon pro-  
 mises so far off; and that we need be pro-  
 vided of a good stock of Patience as well

as of Faith, to stay to be happy till we come to Heaven.

But how many things do readily occur in answer to this Objection. As that so excellent a state of blessedness is worth some patience in staying for it; and that we ought to account that the distance of heavenly things from us, is abundantly recompensed with their so transcendent excellencies; that the enjoyment will not only answer the expectation of our Faith, but also satisfactorily reward all our patience in waiting for it: whilst the hasty lose their *felicity*, and take a shadow in exchange for it, making too much haste to be happy: That so glorious a *Reversion* is a valuable happiness even in the promise, and a better estate than all the Kingdoms of the World in possession: That Heaven is not so remote as not to be able at that distance to contribute towards our comfort and happiness; for who is ignorant to what vast distances the comfortable influences of the Heavens do reach? That it is much to our advantage that the principal rewards of an holy life are not in this World, a place of Briars and

and Thistles and Graves: for since we are not immortal here, it is no great matter that we live in no happier a World: and since on so many respects that this World is no better, it is no great pity that we are not immortally confined unto it. If we will permit to Nature the Laws the Divine Wisdom hath assigned unto it, it is best that our happiness is not present, for then it could not be eternal; and it were a great unhappiness to have our good things in a place, from whence we are removing, and dying to leave our Heaven behind us.

But it is false that the eternal World is so far removed from us, for how long is humane life grown on a sudden, that the next World looks so remote? In matters pertaining to this World, wherein we make a more impartial account, and do not usually devise objections to the prejudice of our own interest, there our present life is reputed to be very short; and three whole lives is but of equal worth in purchase with a Lease of one and twenty years, so short is the intervening space between us and Eternity. When every  
Spring

Spring and Fall, every Week, and Day, and Night puts a period to many lives as well secured as ours, why in our vain presumption do we lengthen our life to those years to which it is not permitted to live in an hundred to attain? We have more wit than to purchase an Estate for life at the same rate of years as we remove eternity from our selves. Is the eternal blessedness remote from us beyond all patience? How many Centuries of Years, how many lives between keep it from us? There is indeed but one single life between that and us, a life of whose shortness all men in all places complain, yet (as it seems) its length is framed into an objection against Heaven, and why not its certainty too? To secure to our selves a prejudice against that blessed place, it is needful that we think otherwise of things than we know them to be. And vainly do we talk of the great distance of Eternity from us, when God hath taken away from humane life more than ten times the years that now are permitted us to live. At this rate of reasoning, what vile wretches would they have been, had they lived

ved in the days before the Flood, when a man at the age of five hundred years was reckoned to die young, and left his Father and Grandfathers to bewail his untimely death? Yet we affirm that even then to be pious was to be wise, and that to fear God and keep his Commandments was the whole wisdom of man; and that Heaven, as remote as it was then, was an excellent and wise design; even then when our life was so long, that had one of them been allowed to live his share of life in these later times, he might have been contemporary with forty Kings in succession, and been a living Chronicle of all their reigns; even then the piety of holy *Enoch* was true Wisdom, and to walk with God that long Walk of three hundred years, was a good evidence of his being the wisest man living. Then to have lived after the flesh and to forget God, would have been folly in *Methuselah* even in his first Century; when he had more years to come, than perhaps now may be allotted to the whole Fabrick of the World to endure before the *expiracion* of all mortal nature; and do we vainly



vainly conceive our time so long, that we have no patience to intend or think on so remote a place as Heaven?

I have thus far pursued some of the best pleas I could devise in defence of a sinful life; more it were easie to produce, and as easie to answer; but they are all such as any man, who will be faithful to his own soul, might as easily answer as invent: For the great danger of the *delusion* lies in their willingness to be deluded; it is a cause that will bear no just reasoning, and the Sinner will be forced to forsake his defence of his ways, and to trie how far he can excuse what it is impossible for him to justify: the best plea of excuse, because the truest that can be alledged is, that the ungodly have such a strong *propensity* to evil, as is hard to be resisted; and that they do not make choice of their evil courses by reasonable *motives*, but from the sway of their depraved *inclinations*, and Nature will not be repelled with an Argument; so heavy bodies verge downwards not from any sufficient *magnetism* in the earth to attract them to it, but they



they go with the sway of their own weight; though they are always degraded, and sometimes broken with their fall.

But this is more a concession than a good excuse, and it is to yield themselves to become corrupted to the degree of unreasonableness we contend for; that their corrupt will and vicious affections are too hard for their reason; that Wisdom is most eligible, but Folly most agreeable. And is the *propensity* of nature to evil a justifiable excuse for a reasonable creature to suffer himself to be carried along with it? Must we needs humour and cherish a Disease, because we have it, though we know that by being indulged unto, it becomes mortal? We could but reason so, if our spiritual sickness were incurable, and there were *no balm in Gilead, nor Physician in Israel*, that the health of our souls might be recovered; that is, if there were come no Saviour to save us from our sins, and we had no knowledge of any sanctifying Spirit, and God were as parsimonious of his grace, even when we seek it with that earnestness

ness and perseverance as it ought to be fought, as is the highest impiety to think.

## SECT. IX.

**T**Here is another principle of Universal Reason of the like nature with that foregoing, which suffers evidently in a sinful life; that is, that *we ought to have the greatest care to rescue and preserve our selves from the greatest evil, and to keep our selves circumspect and watchful in consideration of the imminency of such a danger.* Upon the same reason the stoutest man alive will not stand firm against a falling Tower, nor fearlessly keep his ground against the inundation of a Sea. Upon the same Reason the people sought their safety by an hasty flight, when the earth clave asunder and opened a voracious Grave to swallow up Sinners alive, (*Numb. 16. 34.*) But though Hell hath opened its mouth as wide, yet Sinners despise that fear, and no warning can

can make them flee from the wrath to come. Can any thing reasonable abide such an amazing danger? Less fears have routed whole Armies. The state of lost Sinners is incomparably the greatest of all evils to which Mankind is exposed, and it stands in the same degree of evil as Heaven doth of good, and is as deep as that is high. We may consider it as a state of positive suffering, or as it is an exclusion from the portion of the Blessed; for it is a great aggravation of the miseries there, that that great *chasm* or gulf which obstructs the passage of their persons, yet permits one to their sight; there being perhaps no one part of *perdition* that hath more of Hell in it than the sight of Heaven lost; which blessed place, though now it be disallowed and rejected of Sinners, yet being irreparably lost, will recover a better esteem; and did it but stand in the same account with them now, as it shall when they shall look up unto it out of Hell, they would pursue it with such vigorous and continued endeavours, as scarce ever proved unsuccessful, and use that violence with which the Kingdom of

Heaven

Heaven never yet but would be taken. But agreeable to their present apprehensions, it cannot seem to them so great a misery to be banished from that place, from which they wilfully estrange themselves, and the enjoyment of which, if they thought so valuable, they know they might attain on the reasonable condition of putting on meet and necessary dispositions to live there.

It is therefore a more probable motive to exhibit some representation of the positive sufferings as the Scripture foretels them; and if we lay together all that is told us there of that accursed state, the description will have such an aspect of terrour, as no man in reason can considerately look on, but he must resolve on the wisest courses to prevent. For how many degrees of stupidity had a man need to have to be able to forbear conversion, who believes that the rewards of impenitency shall be the terrors of *the blackness of darkness for ever*, (*Jude 13.*) the incessant gnawings of the deathless *worm*, (*Mark 9.40.*) the exquisite torments of an *unquenchable fire*, (*Dan. 12.2. Matth.*

22. 12. Chap. 25. 41. ) the everlasting shame of a confounded Face and a speechless Tongue, and to drink of the same cup of wrath that the divine justice hath mingled for such great offenders as the evil and accursed Angels, who have always prosecuted an irrelenting enmity against Heaven.

It is especially material to our Argument, to consider that the Scripture makes shame and confusion of face to be one very considerable ingredient of the eternal state of the Wicked; for the consideration of that infernal shame, which is the result of an awakened mind and reason, manifestly evinces the unreasonableness of sin, the matter of that shame; for upon conscience of having done and lived according to the rules of true reason, though we should suppose the man to be miserable, yet he should never be confounded: and when no confusion of face forbids him to look up, and he can weep without blushing, this somewhat easeth the weight of his troubles, and enlightens the darkness of his condition. But there is an exquisite torment in shame, especially

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ly when such circumstances at that day shall concur to aggravate and awaken it: when the infamy of sin shall become the more conspicuous from the opposite glory, that shall shine so brightly in the face of all holiness and goodness; and the evil shall not be able to abide the unsupportable shame of being so unlike the good, and the greater confusion shall cover their faces to behold the glory with which the good are crowned, and all the light and glory of Heaven shall conspire to expose the shame of so perfect a deformity as Sin is, to the nature of that blessed place; and in the blackness of the faces of the accursed Spirits, the Wicked shall see the Image of their own deformities: and besides, the shame that shall necessarily spring up up into their faces, as the natural result and emanation of being wicked, there shall be a further shame inflicted on them, as the punishment of being so; when God shall on set design expose them to open shame, and pour contempt upon them. Our Lord when *S. Mark 8.38.* he foretels them, that *he will be ashamed of them when he cometh in the glory of his Father*

ther with the holy Angels, doth as much as if he should threaten to pour shame upon them before all that illustrious company, and consequently in the sight of all the World, of Heaven and Earth, Angels and Men at his right and at his left. The quality and numbers before whom the reprobate Sinner must abide his shame, add very much to its aggravation: and no wonder if he supplicate the mercies of the Mountains and Rocks to fall on him and cover him, to escape the shame of being seen; and it is threatned as the Emphasis of their punishment to be punished in the presence of the holy Angels, and in the presence of the Lamb, *Rev. 14. 10.* There cannot but be an insupportable shame in being disowned of Christ, and an angry scornful look of his shall blast the Faces of the wicked into a blackness of shame and confusion. So great a shame is the natural consequent, and the appointed punishment of Sin, as shall make the lost Sinner think the blackness of Hell not black enough to hide his cursed head from the shame of being ungodly; so little shall he be able to preserve his constancy to his



present apprehensions of Honour and Shame. But the light of Eternity will rectifie all his mistaken conceptions, and bring all the World to the same mind of which now it is the design of the holy Scriptures to make them; in which we may learn before what must be our eternal thoughts, and what opinion we shall have of all things unchangeably in all eternity. At present we see many a Sinner taking glory in the matter of his eternal shame, and contrariwise he is ashamed to do what he will be eternally ashamed not to have done; he now would almost blush to be thought not to dare to sin, and if nothing else hindered him, he is ashamed to be godly, and that his companions should see in him the true signs and fruits of the fear of *powers invisible*. Thus deluded he runs upon the object of his greatest *aversion*, ungodliness being above all things in the World most inglorious and shameful. Which truth is a just reproof of many weak minds, who are, especially in some companies, ashamed to make open profession of the little goodness they have, and conceal it as it were

a sin which they are to reveal but onely in confession.

From the little we have spoken already, omitting many grievous aggravations of the miseries to come *on the wicked, and them that forget God, on such as know not God, and obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, (Psal.9.17. 2 Thess.1.8.)* we may learn not to wonder, (Sinners having such apprehensions of Sin as they ordinarily have) that they should charge God with meting hard measure, in affliging penalties of so grievous nature, and so long duration to punish the transgressions of his Laws; as it were indeed if sin were so little a thing in truth, as it is in their account. It were too wide a digression in this place to undertake a defence of the Justice of that severity; onely this one thing may be worth our consideration, that the very greatness of the severity is of some advantage to us, and why might not Mercy it self design thereby to obstruct more effectually our way to Hell, as expecting it of us, that the dreadful-ness of those Flames should render them inaccessible to us; for to do according

to the Reason and Wit we practise in all other cases, we could not desire a better Fence about all the Confines of Hell, than the known terrours of such unsupportable sufferings, and everlasting Fires would be their own defence against all humane invasion. Whereas if it were but a tolerably evil state we should be more ready to yield to the sway of our degenerate nature, and to abide the venture; now being thus insupportable, according to the wisdom we have in all but eternal things, it should barr all the reasonable nature thence; so that the prospect which the divine *revelation* hath opened into that place of perdition, is not more full of terrour than of motive and argument; (*aliquisque usus fuit ignibus illis*) and ought to be improved of us to the prevention and remedy of those sins wick otherwise it is appointed to revenge. It is a loud and pressing call to us to repent, now a few drops of sincere tears may be of more worth and avail than a whole stream there, which shall not be able at all to assuage the immortal Flames with which they shall mingle.

But this is not all the benefit that we gather

gather from the Doctrine of Hell, it being apt to excite in us the zeal and resolution it is needful to have to press into the Kingdom of Heaven: For to escape from Hell, we have no whither to look but onely to Heaven, whither we might not so readily look, if not compelled by such a pressing necessity; till flying to it but for a Sanctuary we may obtain for an inheritance, and so in some sort we may owe Heaven to the opposite place: For to avoid extream misery, we are placed under a necessity of being supremely happy.

But Sinners make a custom of forsaking their Reason as often as it leads them to an holy conclusion; they will not follow it through a train of wise inferences, though they be too ne'er so easie and natural; otherwise the acknowledged insupportableness of the punishments of an ungodly life, would not be our least security from those evils, nor our least advantage towards the contrary blessedness.

But whereas they charge God with unmercifulness, it is they themselves who are unmerciful to themselves, since they

suffer not onely their deserts but their choice too. For Hell which God hath appointed for the *preservation* of his government of the World is not so hot or so lasting that it can keep them out of it, nor (as it seems) so bad in their account, as to render it worth turning holy for to escape it: and why should they expect mercies from God which they deny to themselves? If they do not think the damnation of Hell severe enough to deter them from their sins, why should he think it too severe to save the honour of his Laws and Government? and if it be not too severe for themselves to venture on, why should it be thought too severe for him to ordain? and which is more cogent, if it be not too severe for them to expose themselves unto for the sake of such pitiful temptations, why should it be thought too severe for him to appoint for great reasons and weighty ends?

Upon the most impartial consideration, doth not Reason it self dictate to us above all things to make good provision against so great and so just a fear? and

is it not a part of wildom, which is too plain to be disputed, to argue thus with our selves : If these things be so, *What manner of persons ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness ?* Or are the pleasures of sin worth the venture of eternal undoing ? and are the numbers of Sinners who quietly abide so great a venture, well satisfied in their minds, that it shall moderate all the torments to remember that they have enjoyed pleasures worth all they shall suffer ? But if the quite contrary be true, and the remembrance of their sins shall produce a far different effect, then nothing can be more unreasonable than to continue a sinful life in spight of such fears ; and if there be any one consequence unexceptionable in all humane reason, it is this ; To repent that we may not perish.

Let Repentance be as severe a Grace as it looks for, and as grievous to a carnal mind to set about, as the setting of a broken bone. Let us grant the difficulties of Conversion, that it is the acquist of earnest and continued Prayers and  
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Tears, and Conflicts, and Self-denials; yet nothing is more unreasonable than to prefer the eternal miseries before those necessary means of their *prevention*. He that will not part with an incurable member to preserve his life, is foolishly pitiful to himself; and though sin have obtained the seeming usefulness of a *right hand*, or the real dearness of a *right eye*, yet it would be extreme madness to preserve it to be cast with it into Hell, *where the worm never dies, and the fire never goes out.*

From the consideration that to persist in a sinful life, is to put away from our selves the greatest good, and to precipitate our selves into the worst of Evils, (which is the import of the two foregoing principal Heads of this Discourse) there results a further degree of evil in Sin, beyond what hath yet been charged on the Sinner in the charge already exhibited against him: that is, of being not onely unreasonable, but unnatural too; though it be an unnatural thing for man to be unreasonable, yet he is so in a farther degree, and sins against universal Nature, which in all beings, the Sinner onely excepted,



cepted, seeks its own preservation; and no Creature, save him alone, leaves it self without witness of intending the proper good of its nature. For all that self-love with which the Wicked (and not unjustly) are charged, they are unpardonably guilty of the contrary Extreme, and they do love themselves both too much, and not enough: the self-love, which in the Sinner becomes a Vice, by its excess is terminated on the Brute in him, as if all himself were nothing else; his heart is hardened towards his own soul to the being destitute of true compassion towards it in a condition, wherein to be able to shew no pity, he ought to have no bowels; though to deny our selves be one of the hardest Lessons in Christianity, and fit to be joined with the Taking up the Cross, yet towards his Soul he practises it so freely, that it is enough to bring his kindness into suspicion, where it is so easie for him to deny; how importunately soever it bespeaks his consideration in the earnest language of its necessities and danger, it is accustomed to denials: and what Self-denial can equal the denying our own Souls

Souls to be happy? to be utterly divested of Self-love, Nature it self will not permit; there is a Root and Stock of it left for Grace to be engrafted on, and else all the Arguments of Conversion from Promises and Threatnings, had nothing to take hold of in the Sinner: but the Flesh engrosses so much of it in him, that he loves, and makes account of this better part in so low a degree, that his actions and ways, well examined, carry more marks and proofs of Hatred than Love to his Soul. We all account the Devil an Enemy of Souls, but the mischief he imagines against them, the Wicked themselves put into execution, and in many cases, they seem as forward to act, as he to devise: If they were as tender of their Souls, as the kindness that is due to them requires at their hands, he might go and torment himself with an unsuccessful Malice. It must be granted, that they do not intend so direct a spight as the Destroyer intends against their Souls; but they do the same mischief, onely with this difference; he loves the pleasure of undoing them; and they love better  
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than their own souls, the pleasure by which they are undone: and that love, is in effect, none at all, which can allow such actions, as to be able to do which, in reason it were needful to hate. This is the sense of the Scripture, *Prov. 8. 36.* *He that sinneth against me wrongeth his own soul, all they that hate me, love death;* and to love death, is to hate ones self: and what the Scripture, *Prov. 1. 15.* affirms of one sort of Sinners, is applicable to all; *They lay wait for their own bloud, they lurk privily for their own lives.* For in effect he conspires against his own Soul, who exercises his Invention and Wit to invalidate and obstruct the means of his salvation, and to baffle the Arguments by which he ought to be converted, and ever to find out fresh excuses to delay what, his heart might die within him, and become as cold as a Stone to think, that it should be forever left undone; who puts away from him eternal life, as if it were about to do him a mischief; and makes himself deaf to the proposal of eternal happiness, as if he could not trust himself with the charms of so great an offer: yea,

yea, he spills on the Floor the most precious Restoratives provided for him, and tears off the plasters from his Wounds, lest he should be healed, for he will die. For reasonable Creatures, the mischief they wilfully do, they may be said to intend: he denies Heaven to himself, who will not go thither in the onely way that leads to that blessed place; and he that irreclaimably pursues the way of perdition, needs do no more to deserve the name of the Destroyer of himself. It would require a great degree of ill nature and inhumanity, not to succour a stranger in a less danger than that, of which the Sinner suffers his own soul to abide the venture, wherein to neglect it is all that need to be done towards its perdition; and how can he say that he loves that better part of himself, unless love be the dullest and most unactive passion within the heart of man? or is it consistent with the kindness due to the most excellent part of our Nature, to rate the eternal happiness of the Soul below the transitory pleasures of Sin, to make that the most neglected thing in all our keeping; and

and seldom to do any thing displeasing to the Flesh, towards the attainment of the greatest good, of which the Soul is capable. Such persons love their Souls (it seems) with such a love as that is, they make profession of towards God, even with a love that can be content with doing nothing for the sake of the object beloved. Is that Love which can venture the Soul on the brinks of so dangerous a Precipice as that, whose descent is into Hell? that can hear of all the joys and blessedness within the gates of Heaven, and think the Soul not worth the diligence needful to get thither? and deny Heaven to it, for the sake of some difficulty that ought to be none to Love? for all the difficulty in the way to Heaven is multiplied ten degrees, for want of a love within us, worthy of God, and of our own Souls.

If to love, be to have a just concern for the object beloved; if it be to serve its Interest, and to seek its good; if it be to watch over it to defend it from any impending mischief, and to be of continual solicitous fear, when any danger threatens

tens it, then how doth a wicked man love his own soul? He is indeed so far wanting in such a love as is due unto it, that he is void of that charity towards it, to which all the Miserable and the Distressed have a right; unless it be charity in the Churl in *St. James* to bid the poor Destitute have the necessaries which he himself denies him. All the love or charity their immortal Souls have to thank the wicked for, lies within the compass of a languid wish; they wish them well, but are able to see them perish.

to avoid our Lord's wrath, and to save our souls, we must be careful to keep our hearts from being drawn out to any other object but to him who is our Lord and our God. This is the true way to love him, and to love him is to love our souls. And this is the true way to love our souls, and to love our souls is to love him who is our Lord and our God. This is the true way to love him, and to love him is to love our souls. And this is the true way to love our souls, and to love our souls is to love him who is our Lord and our God.

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which is the case of a sinner. And how can we not think him to be a very unreason-  
 sonable Person, whom we should hear  
 speaking

## SECT. XI.

**I** Add in the last place for the affinity of this Head with the ensuing Conclusion, that *it is manifestly repugnant to all right reason to do such things, and to take such a course as is not able to abide Consideration*; than which nothing can be more evident: For Consideration is but Reason in the Act, displaying its light about the Subject under Inquisition. And to avoid our Reason, is implicitly to confess our selves conscious of a disobedient purpose towards it, or an obnoxiousness to its reproofs. In this sense that saying of our Lord is made good; *John 3. 20. Every one that doth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov'd.* It cannot but be unreasonable to do what is necessary to be rashly and unadvisedly done, or not at all; which is the case of a Sinner. And how can we not think him to be a very unreasonable Person, whom we should hear

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speaking after this manner. "I will now  
go and do such a thing, on which if I  
think deliberately, I must never do it:  
my mind misgives me of so much innate  
evil, or consequent mischief, and I great-  
ly suspect so much folly in my purpose;  
that I must not consider for fear I desist;  
but I will do it because it is agreeable  
to my inclination; and that I may be  
able to do it, I will not think: what-  
ever shall be the sequel, I will pursue  
my pleasure, and suppress every thought  
which offers to interrupt it. I will pre-  
vent the interposal of my own mind  
and thoughts, and take care that by  
by considering, I do not give Wisdom  
the advantage to controul me; for my  
own Will is dearer to me than all the  
Reason and Wisdom in the World. No  
man that makes profession of being Rea-  
sonable but would be ashamed to dis-  
course so repugnant to it. But yet all  
this absurdity is virtually contained in  
doing such things, which that they may  
be done, the Sinner is conscious to him-  
self, that he must not consider: which is  
his very case, only he must not have ex-  
plicit

licit conceivings of the sense of doing things impatient of consideration, and it is necessary that he hide from himself the artifice by which he is to be undone; and so become able to do unreasonable things, not discerning the unreasonableness of doing them. Thus he escapes the plenary Conviction of that Folly of which he cannot chuse but carry in his breast a vehement suspicion: For by an industrious avoiding of consideration, he betrays a suspicion in himself of not doing wisely; and implicitly confesses a guilt, in being not able to abide an examination. But Wisdom can abide the light, and it need not be ashamed before the Sun: For by Examination and Trial, it attains not onely Justification, but Honour. The more a good man considers, the more he is satisfied in himself of the wisdom of his choice; so much that Consideration not onely confirms his choice, but excites him to mend his pace, in a course that so manifestly appears to be wisely chosen: when through humane frailty at any time he is growing remiss, by consideration he renews his strength.

thereby growing more able, as well as more resolved. It is deformity that begs the patronage of darkness, and prays the light to depart; For it is a punishment to that to be seen. But Beauty may be content to be exposed, and it stands in no danger of mens eyes and the light. Such is Wisdom, Consideration sets a greater lustre on it; it is Folly that is shie of the light, as being ashamed of it self. Why is the Sinner so backward to consider his ways and his state? Is his own mind become his Enemy, and is he afraid of the partiality of his own thoughts? If he be well assured of any Wisdom that there is in a sinful life, he may Consider boldly, and it will be a pleasure to Think.

That Sin is not able to abide consideration, we may confidently appeal to the Conscience of a wicked man, if he would tell us truly, how carefully he avoids the Inquisition of his own Thoughts; and how unable he is to bear an impartial inspection into his own Soul. Yea, he would willingly break every Glass, and stir the Mud in every Water, whereby he should be in danger to meet the true reflexion.

flexion of himself. Sin both before and after the commission of it, ill abides consideration: Before, because the man will sin, he will not consider; and After, he dares not. First, he resists his own thoughts, and then he flies from them, having had the courage to do what his courage fails him impartially to think on.

1. Before the commission of Sin the Sinner must not consider, because it is necessary for him not to know what he doth: as our Lord speaks of his Murderers, *Luke 23, 34. They know not what they do.* for had they not made shift not to know, that he was the very Son of God, *the brightness of his Fathers glory, and the express image of his person, Heb. 1. 3.* higher than the Angels, appointed Judge of all the World, from whose mouth all Generations of men must hear the definitive sentence for their eternal state, then they could never have been able to have acted those despights and indignities that he suffered of them: so generally in all other cases of Sin, it is very requisite that the Sinner may not know what he doth, or which is all one, that by inconsideration

he suppress and make void all his knowledge. Indeed Infidelity it self is a very needful qualification to him that would sin freely; but because that is not offa present and ready attainment, inconsideration must supply the want of that Vice so needful to the ends of Sin. To this purpose it is greatly requisite that the Sinner doth not consider things so worthy to be considered, as that he incenses against himself an irresistibile anger, in fear of which the greatest humane courage ought to tremble; that he sports upon the Confines of a deadly Precipice; that the Cup of his pleasure, whereat he drinks so deliciously, is mingled with the poison of Dragons and the venom of Asps, *Deut.* 32. 33. He must consider none of these things; but forget Heaven and Hell, God and his own Soul, that he may be able to do what he could but do, if these were not; and indeed so far as to obviate all their efficacy, inconsideration makes them not to be. He must not take a deliberate counsel, nor weigh threatnings against temptations, just fears against false hopes in an equal ballance, like

like one that would be able to justify the wisdom of his doings, but he must rush into his Sins, as the Horse into the Battle, Jer. 8. 6. which by the musical incantation of the Trumpet being put into a fit of brutish fury goeth on to meet the Instruments of death, and considers not, that he serves no ends of his own worth the danger into which he runs. Thus the Sinner must hearken to nothing but the present Enchantment of his Sins, and consider nothing to come, think on nothing but the allurements of sinful pleasures, and open his breast to receive in the whole temptation, and let his thoughts expatiate in a sinful expectation, flattering himself into the mischief with the promise of that satisfaction in sinful ways, which he shall be sure never to find; but for other things, which being considered as they ought, would make him have but a little heart to his Sin, he leaves the consideration of them till it be time for him to think to repent.

2. After the commission of his Sins, it requires a great measure of hardness of heart, or (if he had rather have it so called)



led) of sinful courage to dare to think what he hath done, impartially to consider that he dared to trample under his feet the Majesty of the Imperial Crown of Heaven, and to violate a Law given with the dreadful solemnities of Thunder and Lightning, as a specimen of the terrors intended to revenge the violation of it; and that thereby he is become obnoxious to the eternal torments, having contracted a guilt, that would make the foundations of the World tremble to bear; with many other things of the like nature, which inseparably belong to a sinful life, till it be repented of and forsaken, all which the Sinners courage fails him to consider; and now he is ready for any company, or divertisement, to avoid his melancholy, an hard name for the reflexion of his thoughts upon his Souls condition. He must seek his pleasure in the broad World, and become a Vagabond and Fugitive from himself; if he look diligently into his own brest, he is in danger with *Belshazzar*, *Dan. 5. 10.* that his thoughts will trouble him, and that he be not able to preserve the steadiness



of his countenance. He that in a dark night had successfully passed over a dangerous Rivot, on a Plank so narrow that one false step must needs have drowned him, may be allowed to have done ill to go back in the light to affrighten himself with a past fear, and to die of the danger which he had escaped. But here the case is far different, the Sinner is not in any more safety for escaping the danger of his own thoughts; and Inconsideration is as deadly as it is to Sin. But yet only in pursuance of an hearty purpose to repent, a Sinner may well have but little mind to consider: if he turns into himself, his Conscience meets him in an anger, which he feels as a Sword in his bowels; and his Conscience is but his own Reason remonstrating against his evil doings; passing a sentence of condemnation upon him, which he sensibly feels within himself: For the Sinners own Mind and Reason will never forgive him till he hath repented; and he shall never be able to obtain a plenary Indulgence from himself to live ungodly. For his Conscience is like the Angel whom God

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sent before the Israelites to keep them in their way; and whom they were commanded not to provoke, *Exod. 23. 21.* It will not pardon his transgressions, for the name of God is in it. All the Reason and Understanding which he dares to suffer, charges him with Folly and Madness; he feels inwardly the scourge of his own thoughts, and is of a base Reputation with his own Conscience, that is, with himself. We cannot but judge that man to suffer a very uneasie penance, who having by some base and shameful crime, forfeited his good name with all men; conceives (like *Cain* in his guilt) that every man he meets revenges his crime by thinking on it, and so is continually put to shame in himself by the suspected dishonour of mens thoughts. And the case of the wicked man is much alike to be accounted of, who, though he may have escaped sins of great infamy amongst men, yet is within himself of an ill name, and base reputation; his own thoughts pour shame and contempt upon him, and he scarce dares consider, in fear of a reviling and reproachful thought: his business

ness must be to know and understand himself but little, and by all means possible, to avoid himself in secret in all just consideration of himself.

It is good wisdom to lay up comfort for the time to come, in making our future times beholding to the days before past, for a comfortable remembrance of things wisely and piously done; to do so now, as shall minister a delightful reflexion to our following years; and that we may enjoy our first years over again, in our last, in the conscience of the sincerity in which we have lived. It is onely wisdom and goodness that yields pleasure upon reflexion, the good and pleasure of this World perishes in the using; when it is past it is lost. It was poor comfort to *Dives* to remember that he once had his good things. And they are arrived unto a great degree of wickedness, who are able to take pleasure in the memory of a Sin: for Sin naturally yeilds trouble upon the remembrance of it. Therefore it is not enough to say, that the Sinner loses every day, as fast as it passes over, and that to his own future comfort, as well as

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to the main end of his being, he lives in vain, and life is of no advantage to him, but onely for the same moment that it actually is in being; but further, his life is still the worse for what he hath lived already; all that is past of his life is prejudicial to all that is to come; for by treasuring up guilt he despoils the days to come of their comforts, and obviates the pleasure of the future light. If he lay any thing of a spiritual nature, and eternal importance to heart, he enjoys himself still worse and worse; the last years having to account for the follies and madness of all that went before, till he come to possess together the infirmities of old Age, and the iniquities of his Youth.

The substance of this present reasoning amounts to this, that the Sinner shall never be able to justify the wisdom of doing such things, as it shall afflict him to remember; which he ought to wish to be blotted out of the History of his Life, and that his memory might lose all the Impression of for ever, that eternal obscurity might take them, and they (if it were possible) be remanded to the same

same darkness and silence with things that never were, and which not onely ought, But shall (if considered) trouble him the longest day that he shall live; and turn his memory into a Store-room of Terror, and Shame, which every time it is stirred, it shall throw up, as the troubled Sea doth, mire and dirt, *Isa. 57. 20, 21.* To these things (no doubt) some will be ready to reply, How seldom doth the Sinner betray himself to be so uneasie in a sinful state? and is he not rather less *trouble than other men?* *Psal. 73. 5.* So that good men have been in danger to envy the tranquillity of their condition; for certain they are amongst the foremost to rejoyce, and they do not look as if it were so uneasie a thing to have sinned.

To which it is easie to return, that they have more reason than others to provoke themselves to an outward mirth, that they may avoid the inward disquiets that belong to their state; and to make choice to rejoyce abroad, having so little matter of joy at home in their own breasts. We have supposed all this while that it is in  
their

their power in great part not to consider; and we know that they can drink and forget their misery, that possibly they may take sanctuary from their Conscience in some pleasing delusion or vain presumption. But it is certain that the Sinner cannot impartially consider and be satisfied too; he enjoys all his peace by Usurpation, and owes it to Inconsideration, Mistake, and Error; and dares not examine the reason of it, for fear of disabusing himself, and that he be forced to surrender his unjust possession, the Peace to which he hath no right. We challenge him to think impartially, to abide an equal trial, to retire into his own breast, and to dare to know the truth of himself; and then (if he can) to applaud himself, and upon advised consultation to take pleasure in the choice that he hath made, and to be able to tell us what inward satisfaction of mind he finds in the agreeableness of his ways to the Laws of Wisdom? But this is too much in reason to exact of the Sinner; after an equal consideration, let him but tell us, whether all the pleasure of Sin should tempt him into it, if



if after the Sin he were not able to controul his own thoughts, and it depended not much on his own pleasure, how little he would think? Whether if he had not art to avoid his Conscience, he would dare to provoke it? And let him farther tell us, with what reason he avoids consideration, now repentance may remedy his Errors, to refer it to another World, when he shall have an whole eternity to think over and over such thoughts in compleat despair? Then what were a power of Inconsideration worth? One draught of some powerful Lethie that should make him forget all that ever he hath been and done, were a better relief than ten thousand such drops as he in the Ramble begged in vain. And what Wit is able to defend the doing those things, which in eternity it shall be so material a part of Hell to remember?

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**SECT.**



SECT. XII.

**F**ROM the last foregoing Considerations I take occasion to make an Observation of the Repugnancy of a sinful life to the humane Understanding in those two powers and properties thereof, Reflexion and Fore-sight, by which we have a great advantage over irrational Creatures, who are capable of enjoying but the bare present; for thereby we do in a sort partake something of eternity, and are in some sense present with past and future Times, by which we learn Wisdom from Ages past, and fetch Comfort from Times to come; Profit by Examples before the Flood, and Rejoice in Joys to come at the End of the World.

I. A Sinful life is altogether inconsistent with Reflexion; as to reflexion upon and into our selves, Sin cannot bear it; as to reflexion on the Examples of all past Times, it is repugnant

to all the wisdom that is to be collected from them.

First, Sin is not able to bear reflection on our own ways, and into our own hearts. We have in the fore-going Section considered how uncomfortable such a reflection is to the Sinner, so that this Prerogative of his Nature serves but to trouble and disquiet him: and if it might be permitted unto him, it would be for his ease to be divested of it, and to become as the brute Creatures to whom Nature hath denied the power to reflect, as being incapable of doing things worthy of reflection; and in like manner the Sinner, as to the principal course of his life, doth things onely worthy to be forgotten. It were more conducive to his peace, if he might be permitted to live all his life like as Brutes live in this respect; who have nothing to do with what is past, and to all intents are as it were dead to all the time that is gone. How many advantages have Beasts that are just matter of the Sinners envy, and for which it would prove no losing bargain to give his Reason and Immortality in exchange.

2. A Sinful life defeats all the wisdom that Reflection is able to gather from all past times, the examples and experience of all the World is lost upon him; all time past is gone in vain, and he is not at all the wiser for the experience of the almost six thousand years of the World; and all the World before him hath lived nothing to his benefit and instruction: For he could not have made a worse choice, though there had never been an example before him, and he were the first man whom a flattering temptation had betraid into mischief: he could but have taken the same courses, though *Adam* had proved successful in his disobedience, and he and his posterity had enjoyed his Sin as comfortably as ever the Deceiver could promise, or he himself hope.

But now that the experience of all Ages hath attested that *the triumphing of the Wicked is short*, that the easiest consequent of Sin is to repent, and the inspired Records have delivered down the memories of the Wicked in characters of dishonour, we have our Reason in vain, if we gather no instruction to our selves from all

all History and Experience; but make our selves like those who live in History but onely to Infamy, and are preserved from Forgetfulness but onely to Shame and Contempt. And do we chuse to live such lives as we would count a punishment to be recorded? As if the History of our lives should not meet us in the other World, and the last day would not revive the infamy of our Sins; which the Grave and Forgetfulness may for a time conceal: and will it not be more shame to be exposed then before Men and Angels, and to appear before all the World conspicuously vile, than to have our memories preserved in a Chronicle in a Character, in which we would be ashamed to see our selves? By reflection on Times past, we may assure our selves that it was in undoubted folly that the Wicked made such a choice, which soon they found they had little reason to rejoice in, that all the pleasure of their evil ways was too dear at the price of the subsequent dishonour and misery, into which they are changed; and the Character of Ungodliness is infamous in all

Examples before us. But is Sin onely of an ill savour in the dead? The Living indeed give it a little lustre and reputation, and in the examples of men alive, it hath more allurements; but is it so long before they shall be reduced to the same state, wherein no man will think them worth his envy, though they may have been the happiest of all the Ungodly. And it is as little Wisdom to imitate the Vices, as to envy the happiness the Dead once had; and it is equal happiness to have had pleasures which now are past, as it is wisdom to make such our choice, as very shortly must be so; and which in all past examples we see disparaged by their being at an end, and which in ceasing to be, have confessed their unworthiness of competition with such as are to remain forever.

It is easie by reflection on Times past in the Examples of the dead, to see all the felicity confuted that is to be found in the ways of Sin; but the Sinner allows himself to be no wiser for all other mens experience, and will take no confutation of his Sins, but the having undone himself

self by them; and he will be what those men have been, whom he believes to have perished in those very ways in which he follows them; that is to say, that he will not believe that poison to be mortal which hath destroyed ten thousand lives, till he hath made experiment upon his own, and will take no other proof of its deadly Nature, but to be dead himself upon taking it: Otherwise all past experience will confirm us in this great truth, *That to do wickedly is to do foolishly, and that our only wisdom is to repent, and to sin no more.* For confirmation hereof, it were a very obvious thing to produce the examples of great and eminent Sinners, of whole Nations of the Wicked, of near a whole World undone by Sin, whom we ought not to suffer to have perished in vain; but to learn wisdom by the Example, which it cost them so dear to give us, having perished in confirmation of the evil that there is in Sin.

2. Neither doth the Sinner make a better use of his power of Fore-sight; he lives but *ex tempore*, values onely the present time, in the worst sense he takes



no thought for to morrow, no, not for the eternal one. As to the main end of Foresight and pre-apprehension he hath received it in vain, and makes himself like the Beasts, which because they are to perish so soon, do not need it, and are best without it; hereby in eternal concerns, he hinders himself of all the pleasure of hope, and all the safety of fear. If great things because future, may not be allowed to make an answerable impression on our hearts, we have this part of our Nature redundant, and hope and fear become two useless and superfluous affections within us. I mean (as I just now said) in regard to the things of our eternal state, whose right it is in the first place to be intended: in things pertaining to this life the Sinner knows the use of Fore-sight, and still reaches, after some future good in his expectation, and in a carnal sense lives by Faith and the happiness that he promises himself from this World is always still to come. But a rational Fore-sight is not bounded within the limits of time; by this we are made capable to carry designs beyond the visible World,

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to prepossess the joys of Eternity, and to obviate the contrary evils in their remotest causes; but all this wisdom is frustrated by the Sinner, though he learn it of almost all professions of men in their respective concerns. The Husbandman sows in hope, and expects the return of his Seed but upon a fore-seen Resurrection, and that not more probable in itself, than that which by Faith we look for. And the Merchant expects the return of his Venture, as it were, from another World, divided from ours as impassible as Heaven; but onely that we are better at improving Art than Faith: and between which there are no such ready and speedy ways of communication. But the Sinner to all the purposes of his Soul, renders the power of Foresight useless in him, doing very little with respect to the other World, to which he cannot but expect to be removed in such a space of time, beyond which our very Reason is able to see: by the little wisdom to which he applies his heart, he makes it evident that it is the least part of his work to number his days, as if he could foresee no

end thereof. If the whole state beyond this life were closed up from us in thick darkness, and no revelation had opened the least prospect into the future World, and Heaven and Hell were unknown names, then the Sinner could but do the same things as now he doth; then he could but consult his own will, fulfil the vanities of his mind, mind earthly things and live without God in the World. None of the great realities to come have any influence upon his Counsels, and it makes no alteration with him, that *the Earth and all the works therein, shall be burnt up, and that all these things shall be dissolved.* And he is the same manner of person as he could but be, if the World and he in it were immortal: his life hath no respect to any account that he expects to give, nor is there any appearance therein of any such belief, by all the course of it his life ought to be unaccountable; for apparently he orders it very ill to abide the judgment to come. He may see his own likeness in the unconcernedness of a Beast for all future things, for that without any pre-apprehension of

of the slaughter, revels in the fat pastures, eats and sports to the last, and refrains not the least of its pleasure, because to morrow it must die. Thus in the days before the Flood, without any concern for what was to come, the men of that World enjoyed their good things as deliciously as might be, amongst the pleasures of eating and drinking, and marrying, and mingled the thoughts of a Flood no more with their Counsels, than Sinners now do the consideration of the day of Judgment, but they perished remedilessly; and as they perished, it was not so great a comfort to reflect on, that they had not possessed their perdition before its time by fearing it, as an aggravation of their misery not to have done what in wisdom they ought for its prevention. Thus the Sinner by obstructing the benefit of Foresight, equals himself with the Beasts that perish; and in being no more than they, he becomes many degrees worse. That Question of our Lord to his Disciples was very full of Motive and Argument, *What do ye more than others?* Mat. 5. 47. For Christians ought to be the best of men.

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And it were a question of equal force and great reproach to Sinners to be asked, What are ye better than brute Creatures that wear Horns and tread on Hoofs? Have ye little else material to distinguish you, but an upright aspect, whereby you see the Heavens by immediate intuition, which they look at below in the stream whereat they drink? Can ye content your selves with such like little advantages, and quit the chief Prerogative of your Nature? that is, to understand and to do wisely, to foresee good and evil in their causes, timely to get out of the reach of an evil, whilst it is yet far off. This is the character of a wise man, as the contrary is of a Fool. *Prov. 22. 3.* A prudent man foreseeth the evil and hideth himself, but the simple pass on and are punished.

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## THE CONCLUSION.

**F**ROM this whole foregoing Discourse it is natural to infer the usefulness of consideration towards our recovery from a state of Sin. For upon consideration impartially had, we could very hardly bear with, or pardon in our selves, the doing such contradiction to evident Principles of Reason and Rules of Wisdom as upon our just enquiry appears to be done unto them in living a sinful life. If the Understanding may have its liberty to plead, and be admitted to a just hearing, it would not be born down in such a case of evident truth and wisdom, but would gradually recover its lost authority and power over the inferiour Faculties made to obey it; for who could carry about him an actual conviction of doing foolishly, and persist in doing it? that  
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is, how can he persist in his impenitency having the innate evil, mighty loss and equal danger that attend Sin manifestly presented to him in a due and frequent consideration? Consideration and Sin are mutually so repugnant to, that they cannot bear each other. If a man will sin, he must forbear to consider; or if he will consider, he must forbear to sin: For Sin is of such an evil nature, that if we would make it fit to be considered, it would not readily obtrude it self upon us; and it is of equal difficulty to be considerately foolish, and to be considerately wicked. It is mostly in the power of Inconsideration that Sinners are able to do strange and unaccountable things; by virtue of this they can sin as effectually, as if they had the grossest ignorance or misbelief to the assistance of their sins; so that we shall discern nothing in their ways but what is consistent with as great ignorance, as be-nights the darkest parts of the World; and experience confirms, that a man need not be born and bred in Paganism to be extremely wicked, and to live without God in the World is not onely the sin of

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Infidels; to be able to do this, it is but by inconsideration to forget him: For Inconsideration binds up all the influences of the best knowledge and belief; it is Reason and Faith put into act and exercise by consideration, that is of any force and power to rescue us from our follies and sins.

It is therefore every ones mighty concern to practise the wisdom of Consideration; to be and to do considerately what he is, and what he doth: that our actions and lives be not meer casual things, and therefore not able to abide an account, as not being the result of any mature counsel; or at least having the principal things left out of our consideration, God, our Souls and Eternity.

But let us set the Lord before us, place Heaven and Hell to the best advantage of our inspection, and let it be no prejudice to our Souls in the resolves we take, that they are unseen of our bodily eyes; and so let us sit down and consult, take the best instructions, and call in to our assistance the best judgments that can be had: Let us look beyond the present, to the  
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conclusion of things in competition, and put every valuable consideration into the balance of our account, and let Wisdom be our guide: Let us do in so great a concern as this of Eternity is, as wise men do in all actions of moment; for they will not venture all that they have upon every unexamined appearance, nor upon the specious persuasion of every insinuating person, whom they justly suspect of a design upon them; but in every great concern they consider, lest they should engage themselves in an affair to the prejudice both of their Estate and Reputation: For in worldly things men will be careful not to undo themselves, if it were but for the honour of their Wisdom, lest in becoming Beggars by unadvised courses, they prove themselves Fools, and so should both weep and blush at once. And is it not easie to produce any shadow of reason, why we should not take equal care, and practise equal consideration in the concern of such unspeakable hopes and astonishing dangers, as we have before us, as we do in things pertaining to this lower World,

To encourage us to the practice of Consideration, let us see what expectation of advantage from it we may justly frame to our selves.

I. It is apt to blow up and kinde in us affections agreeable to the nature of the things considered. All experience confirms how weak and languid in a state of Sin the Sinners affections are towards spiritual objects; and what great inactivity is the consequence thereof. But if in faithfulness to our own Souls we would bring such objects near, and represent them to our selves in their true appearances, and with their just advantages, it would make us confess some sensibility within us: for very hard hearts upon pressing application of mighty truths, have been forced to relent, and yeild to the impressions of Fear and Desire; though, different company, thoughts, and imployments have reduced them to the same hardness, as if they had never relented.

First, Let us examine the power of Consideration towards the exciting the affection of a just fear in us. To this purpose let us suppose any person under a just

just conviction that not to fear amidst such reasons of fear as attend a sinful state, is to double his danger; and that for fearing little he hath reason to fear much the more; and that his insensibility threatens him as much as all his sins besides. He may readily meet with great things of mighty efficacy to excite, keep alive, and keep awake in him this needful affection; which things the more he thinks over, and the more agreeable conceivings he hath of them in his mind, the more he shall improve in that fear which is to watch over him. To this purpose let him present to himself in a steady consideration God glorious in holiness, irresistible in power, terrible in majesty, and with attention look over all the ruines that the divine almighty anger hath made upon the provocation of mans sin and impenitency; and let him too assure himself, that after the longest tract of time God is not the more reconciled to evil; and thinks the same of it, and equally bates it, as when he sent a Universal Flood, and rained down Fire and Brimstone to punish and revenge it; that though the

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Messiah become, it is not at all the more safe to sin, and that impenitency and presumption are as mortal as before Christ was born. Let him further in sober conceivings take a Survey of the many fearful threatnings to be found in the word of God, enough to make it the most daring thing in the World to sin. Let him fix a steady look on the description of the eternal punishments, as they are described on purpose to preserve us from so great a danger, if extreme and endless torments, and compleat confusion be considerable enough to make us think on new Counsels. And when such a person hath framed in his mind conceptions agreeable to the truth of these things, and given them their due attention, if he be able to continue not to fear, he gives proof of a stouter spirit than the very Devil can truly lay a claim unto, *James 2. 19.*

Secondly, Let us enquire into the power of Consideration in kindling and exciting our love towards God. To this end let us in a due consideration expatiate over that fathomless and boundless Ocean of Goodness which there is in God, from  
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which every drop of goodness in every thing and person is descended, which streams out in visible emanations over all the World, and feasts all the Host of Heaven with never-ceasing satisfaction and delight, and (if that be not enough) which gave Christ Jesus to the World, and in him manifested forth so much of it self here below, as the heavenly Natures stooping down, find something in his Gospel meet to detain their thoughts, and to entertain their speculation, though accustomed to the sight of that transporting Glory and Beauty which are eternally to be seen in that light which they inhabit. Let us in a like fixed contemplation more nearly look on our Saviour, God manifest in the flesh, performing miracles of Humility, Patience, and Self-denial, and all in pursuance of a mighty design of love towards us, giving sensible demonstrations, that it was easier to him to be nailed to a Cross, than to see us perish; and to abide those base despights, indignities, and contradictions which suffered of Sinners, than to forbear to save our Souls: and so letting those things

things sink into our minds we shall confess that there is an attractive power in goodness, that draws forth the Soul of man towards it, and excites desires in him to be united unto it; and though through the depravity of Humane Nature, such affections so excited may quickly languish, and become almost extinct in presence of the next earthly temptation, yet such mighty considerations duly repeated cannot but contribute towards the rendring such affections habitual, especially if as oft as they arise, they shall be formed into earnest prayers, into which holy affections do almost naturally convert; wherein it were no presumption to look for the powerful concurrence and cooperation of the holy Spirit, succouring us against the reluctant part of our own wills, and taking part with every good thing in us, and cherishing the weak degrees, and strengthening the first beginnings of goodness in our Souls, opening themselves unto the influences of Heaven: for it is unreasonable to think, that that most benign Spirit who frequently knocks at the doors of mens hearts, that are fast shut



against him, and strives with the obstinate, and those that resist him, should withdraw himself from such as by design in diligent considerations and prayers open the doors of their Souls unto him; and that he should suspend those his gracious motions and operations from such as are become so pliable towards their impression, which he is so accustomed to lose on hard hearts: And the first degrees of holy affections being planted and rooted, the following ones by the same repeated means, and greater ease, are to be attained by us whilest we follow on to make it our business to be saved.

Secondly, Another benefit that we may propound to our selves from earnest Consideration, is also a consequent of that fore-going, and is this; that it both excites our endeavours, and awakeneth and increaseth our abilities: for our affections are both our constraint and strength, and most of the inability we complain of in the ways of God, is the result of cold, or but lukewarm affections, and little of the business of Religion is hard indeed, and any otherwise than it is hard to do any thing



thing almost, which we have no heart unto: what our Lord speaks of Faith, we may apply to Love, and say, that all things are possible to him that loveth. The truth is, our Lord is not an hard Master, nor his Commandments hard sayings; but we do not love him enough: the more we love, the more readily we assent to the truth of the easiness of his Yoke, and the lightness of his burthen, and our endeavours so excited, find nothing impossible unto them. It is too evident to be denied that there is no nearer cause of the perdition of Souls that is more universal or more deadly than a spiritual sloth. We talk of the pleasures of Sin, but the truth is, that most Sinners cannot make so much of it, but if it were not more for sloth than pleasure, they might be content to be converted: and doubtless there are many who would not, to the prejudice of their eternal hopes, keep their sinful habits and dispositions for all the pleasure they have in their gratification, but onely for the labour and pains it requires to be divested of them, and for the difficulties of Con-

version: on condition that with little application of their own endeavours, they might be converted by miracle; and as it was in the first preaching of the Gospel, that time of Miracles, be vouchsafed the grace of a meer passive and instantaneous regeneration, I doubt not but they would willingly resign their Sins and change for new Hearts and Natures. If there were a Preacher who had that miraculous power of *S. Peter*, to convert thousands at a Sermon, I doubt not but they would consent to be of the number of his Auditors, and not refrain in fear they should return to their homes with a mighty renovation of their minds, and dreading the danger of becoming regenerate. But the case is not so, we are to obtain a conquest over our sins by great conflicts, earnest, continued and persevering prayers, by repeated acts of Faith, earnest and uncessant looking unto Jesus, frequent acts of Self-denial, and doing violence to our most natural or habitual inclinations; and now the men go away sorrowful, because Heaven hath no easier conditions, and that there is so much difficulty

fidelity to be saved: they are bound with the cord of their sloth, and need not the allurements of great and powerful temptations to undo them. In this case Sloth is as deadly to Souls as any actual violence done unto them, and they need nothing more towards their perdition but to be neglected. External temptations become in great measure superfluous to such as indulge to the indisposition of their hearts, and bestow no pains for their Souls; which is the case perhaps of the greatest number of the ungodly, the chief pleasure they justly pretend unto, is onely the negative pleasure of taking no pains, the dull delight of ease and idleness, and sleep, of offering no force to their indispositions, and conflicting no difficulty that obstructs their good, to go with the current of their own will, to sleep while they can, and to do little but what they would do, though there were no necessity of doing any thing; and this is all the most have to shew why they will perish.

And now great is the efficacy of Consideration, in exciting and actuating the

powers of the Soul, and making us feel within ourselves that we have them, and to learn, that great part of our impotency lies in our not being awake and sensible; and that a work or business in being of a spiritual nature and concern doth not necessarily benum all our powers, and disable all the organs of motion and action in us; as if the sight of a work to be done for God and our Souls, like the Fabulous *Medusa's* head, did change us into but the Images of men, and that to recover the functions of our Nature it were necessary for the World to present it self before us, towards which life, as long as we have any left within us, is apt to put forth it self. Though the Sinner looks like such an enchanted thing towards the works of God; yet Consideration would restore the use of his faculties, and by exciting in him great affections would make him find his hands, to stretch them forth towards Heaven; unloose his tongue, and make his knees confess their joints, and he shall find his bed of idleness an hard place to rest on, and to be idle under mighty convictions, will be more uneasy than

than the greatest diligence, and that it would be a pain to be with-held from doing what a great affection of fear or love requires to be done. God complains of the wicked that they do *not stir up themselves*, *Isaiah 64. 7.* now we are stirred up to action by our affections, and they by consideration.

It remains that it is our great concern to practise earnest and frequent consideration, to *commune with our own hearts and to make diligent search*, that we may be satisfied in our selves of the agreement or disagreement of the courses we take to the Laws of Wisdom. All great things that we have any concern with, have a right to be considered, Heaven and our own Souls have the first claim to our thoughts, and if we were so just as to give all things their due, it would fall to the share of those great things to be much and often thought on. And we cannot use our thoughts more profitably, nor make them turn to better account than in using them in the search of the true Wisdom, and (they being able with matchless speed to compass the widest distances)

ees) in imploying them to fetch instruction, motive and comfort from the other World. It is pity so many thousand thoughts should be lost as Water spilt upon the grounds; and when we have so done, that we should not count our loss, as if they could not be much worth, when we have them so cheap; or as if we thought these wings of our Souls were given us but for to sport our selves in a chase of Vanity, or but to grovel on the ground, and brood over a Clod of Earth: whereas wisely exercised they would return laden with solid delights and profitable instructions, and we might meet with a thought better worth to us than all the World, and in thinking receive an *irradiation* into our minds more profitable and more comfortable than the light of the Sun.

There is indeed difficulty in keeping our thoughts intent on spiritual subjects, our vain minds being ready to close with every opportunity of diversion; but we must accustom our thoughts to be under command, and to abide restraint; for the benefit of holy thoughts is worth all the pains



pains of thinking them, and by accustoming our selves thereunto, the difficulty will convert into pleasure.

Let us apply the Arguments of this Discourse particularly one after another to our selves, and by them stir up our selves to practice agreeable to the conviction we receive from them; let us not suffer great convictions to prove abortive, and our Souls to miscarry of those first conceptions of Wisdom and goodness in us, but let us improve every wise thought into an holy desire, and every holy desire into an habitual good affection, and that into an answerable conversation: to this purpose let us take every argument by itself, and as hitherto we have applied them to serve unto the end of conviction, let us now improve them farther, as motives of persuasion, pressing them upon our hearts, and by particular application of them to our selves, exposing our selves to the full power and force of such arguments, by which it is better to be vanquished than to take ten Cities. Let us dispose our selves to yield and surrender up our self-will, and to be overcome by the



the authority of Wisdom, against which it is no glory to hold out.

Let us think our selves bound to follow such counsels, the wisdom of which is recommended unto us by infallible authority: that is, let us so chuse, and so live, as the holy Scriptures may warrant our choice, and our ways; they are able to bear us out in all the obedience we perform unto them: For can we desire a better justification of the wisdom which we embrace, than the approbation of Infallibility? Let us have that on our side, and we may despise the censures and dissent of all men. We may take Wisdom on trust of the Oracles of God, nor need we care to be any wiser than they are able to make us. Let us not practise any repugnancy to their decrees, as we would not bring our selves into such a straight that we cannot speak one word in honour of the divine Wisdom, but we thereby do confute all our own, and implicitly reproach our selves for forsaking it; nor confess the infallibility of Gods Word, but we do thereby leave our selves assured by infallible authority of doing foolishly;

filly: for doubtless to have no other hope of not being in a mortal error, but what presumes omniscience to see wrong, and infallibility to misunderstand, is to have none at all. Whilest such a Book of most excellent Wisdom stands open to us, can we be content to be not at all the wiser for it? and whilest Infallibility offers us its hand to conduct us in a safe way to eternal blessedness, shall we chuse rather to lose our way in a Wilderness of false hopes, and prefer vain presumptions before the best assurance? Let us not walk in any forbidden ways, wherein by just consequence we shall oppose our own judgment to the unerring Wisdom of God, and so add absurdity to our sin.

2. Let us give up our selves (as safely we may) to the conduct of the Divine Goodness, which takes pleasure in doing good unto us; and let it be seen by the courses we take, that the counsel of the best of friends (our Saviour) hath some influence upon us, and let us do no such things as may justly render us suspected of distrusting the sincerity of his counsels: for no part of unbelief is more injurious

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to our Lord than that which reflects on his right to be trusted of all the world; as if we could not take all his Humiliation, Agony, Cross, and Passion for security in committing our selves to his conduct. Let us trust him securely, and suffer him to chuse for us our end and our way, let us chuse our happiness by his direction, and pursue it by his guidance; and we shall be wiser by his Wisdom than by our own. Let us not in committing sin do such a thing, from doing which the greatest love that ever was made known to the World, endeavours by so many arguments and such powerful persuasions to hold our hands. Let us do this honour to the Divine Goodness, as to believe that God intends our good in calling us to repentance, and persuades us out of our Sins in kindness to our Souls. Let us shew that we do put some affiance in that goodness on which hitherto we have lived, and without which we cannot hope to outlive the moment in present being, and which hath done such kindnesses to our Nature, that if Heaven were subject to like passions with us, might have become  
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matter of the envy of Angels. Aboveall, let us not add this indignity to Supreme Goodness, to prefer in our trust the suggestions of an infamous Deceiver before the admonitions of God; it is a thing that no consideration can bear with, that Malice should carry away the trust from Love, and that we should commit our selves rather to the temptations of the one than the counsels of the other; and to satisfie our selves with this poor Reason, That though the counsels of God carry in them the most kindness and the most safety, yet the Deceivers temptations have the greater charm.

3. In all the counsels we take, and throughout our whole conversation let us have respect to what is like to be our future judgment, and do nothing that is to be repented of; that is to convert in to our future sorrow and shame; but let us frequently ask our selves, what we shall be like to think of our doings, when we shall think them over at our death, and in eternity; for *what is the fruit of those things whereof we are to be ashamed,* Rom. 6. 22. Early and preventive wisdom

is most honourable and most safe. It is the safer counsel, not to do what is to be repented of, than to promise our selves to repent; for there is no greater folly than for a man to trust to the promises which his deceitful heart makes in favour of the Sin he is loth to part with, *Prov. 28. 26. He that trusteth in his own heart is a Fool*; for he trusteth in a known deceitful thing. It is a very venturous thing in a matter of such fearful consequence to trust to such promises which we have so much reason to fear are so seldom made good, as the promises men make to their Souls of a future repentance.

4. Since Happiness is so material a concern of our Souls, let us earnestly look to it, that we do not mistake the thing, and embrace its shadow; and in seeking for it where it is not, weary our selves in the chase of an impossibility. We must here make our choice by Faith; for none of our senses can give us any true information of the thing we look for. It is of great importance not to be mistaken in happiness; for there is no middle state be-

between that and perdition, and our final good and evil are great extremities, there is no mean degree of Happiness above, nor any tolerable degree of misery below. Let us think it worth the diligence needful to that end, to pursue a felicity equal to the highest propensions and most capacious faculties of our Nature. For how should we be content with an happiness that hath onely the name without one signal property of the thing, that is, to be no happier than this World can make us, and no longer than we shall live?

5. Let us not suffer our selves to continue unmoveable and refractory against the greatest necessity, that is, that of saving our Souls (unless we can think that an unnecessary thing) and in pursuance of that end, let us comply with the consequent necessity of repenting and becoming New Creatures. All the necessity that the Sinner can pretend to in favour of his Sin, is such as he cannot but be ashamed to own; on supposition that he will not strive against his vicious distempers and his base affections, nor also the Divine prescriptions, nor comply with the



methods of grace for his recovery, and likes himself too well to be converted: in this case it is a necessity for him to sin, as for the fire to burn, or for any other thing to act agreeable to its own nature. But what necessity compels him so contently to abide in that state, wherein whilest he so continues, it is necessary for him to do foolish, unreasonable, and unexcusable things? when a great necessity indeed calls aloud unto him to repent. Let us hearken to its voice, and make the World and Sin take this for an answer, That we are not at liberty to serve them, being under the power and command of a great necessity, lesser necessities than which do frequently make men endure great hardships, eating their bread in the sweat of their brows, making them forsake Friends and Country, and carry them to the furthest ends of the World. What though it be not a sensible necessity, which pains us in our flesh, and pricks like a Goad into our sides, yet it is a most rational one, and men are to be moved after another manner than Beasts are driven: and yet too, to an  
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awakened mind it is a necessity that may be felt.

6. Let us oppose against the insinuation of all worldly and carnal temptations, the certain promises and comfortable prospect of the blessedness to come; let us disgrace and disable temptations by looking upwards, and so vanquish the World by our Faith. Let us possess our minds with the fairest, that is, the truest character of Heaven we are able to attain, and conceive in our minds (as we are able) how excellently pleasure tastes at the Fountain; and what a different thing Life is there, where it is fed with immediate emanations from the original Spring of all good. Let Infidelity object that we have but onely promises for that felicity, for we need no better security than the Divine Faithfulness, that is, that God doth not falsifie his word, who cannot; and what though it be necessary to die to attain the possession? for is that to be so long first? even so we are as near to the immortal joys, as our next heirs to their earthly expectations; and it is the better estate for being out of this World. Nor

let the difficulties of the attainment be thrown in our way for our discouragement, every thing is not a Lion in that way that looks like it, to an unresolved mind and slothful spirit. None but the Slothful and Cowards object to themselves difficulties in the way of an excellent and wise design: all excellencies have for the most part difficulty in their attainment, and we can despise greater ones than those between us and Heaven, when they obstruct our Earthly projects: and our ordinary discouragements are little to those the Worthies of old made light of, in pursuance of the same Felicity, but not so well revealed; and when life and immortality were not brought into so manifest a light, as that in which now they are to be seen. Let us make Heaven our settled design, and pursue it with that diligence, constancy, and perseverance, which we can readily tell our selves that it is worth, and by frequent looking towards that blessed place, both preserve the constancy of so wise a design, and quicken our selves to give the diligence needful towards its attainment. The

Faithful of old did so many great things in the strength of a look to the same place, which is equally permitted to us to look unto, and which hath lost none of its just motive, attraction, or encouragement, by being better revealed. For the looking unto the recompence of reward, was the Faith that inspired their breasts with so much courage and resolution as well to suffer as to do.

7. And to leave no means untried to forward us towards Heaven, we may stir up our selves with the consideration of the danger of the eternal perdition; and so profit our selves by Hell it self, and make that serve unto our felicity; for it is as full of argument and excitement as it is of terror. Though those Services seem most genuine, that take their motive from Heaven, when by every prospect we take thither, we become more resolved, and better able to resist evil, and to do good: yet doubtless the greatest numbers need Heaven and Hell too, to enforce their obedience.

It remains now after an impartial examination of the ways of Sin by the first

practical maxims of the common understanding of all men, that it is most dangerously foolish, and grossly unreasonable to persist to live ungodly, and that Piety is our Wisdom, or else there is no such thing as Wisdom and Folly in all the World, and Day and Night are names for the same thing, and the Light and the Darkness are not yet divided. Since these things cannot be gain-said. Having discovered that Wisdom to which we may safely commit our Souls, the first part of it is to put it in practice this very day: for it is dangerous to put off our Souls with the promise of Wisdom to come; but there is no danger of being wise or safe too soon. The Sun (if it be that) with haste even to a miracle hurries away our hours, and in them our life; and the wings of time, as silent as they go, keep pace with the swiftest motions in Nature; so that we live so fast, as if in haste to have done living: the eternal World, wherein lies our great concern, is not so remote from us, but we can pass over all the distance in the shortest dimensions of time: for what can we do sooner than die?

And how soon that shall be, we do so little know, that nothing in all the World is more uncertain to us than to live; and all the Wisdom to be learned in eternity comes too late to remedy any final miscarriage. What therefore on the most deliberate consideration our hand findeth to do, let us do it with all our might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the Grave whither we go.

**T H E E N D.**